



Emerging Frontiers for Central College Graduates of 1980
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Thank you President Kline;

Mr. President, Trustees, Faculty, Honored Guests and Graduates of the Class of 1980:

Many mid-west transplants to the Pacific Northwest bring you greetings.

I will not be able to convey personally all of the messages of friendship given to me, but take this opportunity to let you know that your friends out there think of you often and affectionately.

It has been a rich experience for Elizabeth and me to return after these years to our Alma Mater, Central College. It has been a joy to renew acquaintances with many of you.

In preparing for this address, the phrase occurred to me, "The more it changes, the more it remains the same". Graduates of 1980, your grand-parents and possibly parents will remember some great names associated with this institution in other days. I have known ^{most of} them, all. Presidents Stoll, Walters, Miller. Professors Loomis, Matson, Hendrickson, Arnett and the Alberts sisters. Families including Green, Pile, Sorenson, Neuenschwander, Broadbrooks. Families outside of McPherson including the Moore and Lowe families of southern Kansas, the Archer, Joy and Deardorf of Western Kansas--and many others.

The thing that is remarkable about this institution is that a number of the families I have mentioned are still associated with Central and you keep coming on with outstanding, stable people supporting the college and its mission. In the short time I have been here I have renewed my acquaintance with President Kline

and have heard of Professors _____, _____, _____
 and _____. Such families in McPherson as the _____,
 _____, _____, and _____. And outside McPherson
 _____, _____, and _____. All of these
 support the high ideals for which Central has consistently stood.

My objective this afternoon is to provide a perspective for ^{you} the Graduates
 of 1980 in meeting the new frontiers you will encounter in the coming years.
 I will do so in broad strokes rather than in detailed examination. Basically,
 I will say that the major problems of Man have existed from time immemorial.
 Each generation has to meet those basic problems in the form they occur in his
 life time. I will also say that the graduates of this Christian, liberal arts
 college have been given some useful guidelines to assist them in their individual
 pilgrimages to meet those basic problems.

When writing a textbook, a ^{author} writer must be able to clarify a problem, devise
 a coherent answer and present it in an orderly and consistent manner. In a
 real situation things are not as orderly. Each person has to identify the
 problem, the particular form in which it presents itself and then devise an
 answer. The answer for most is written in the record of life, his own pilgrimage,
 rather than a book.

Today, I want to raise a question which may sound very simple but which
 may indeed involve many of the basic problems discussed in philosophy. My
 friends in the Graduating Class of 1980, how are you going to relate to the
 contemporary culture of the ^{this and the next} ~~late 20th and 21st~~ century?

In our consideration of this question, I should like to use as a baseline,
 a statement which was made some 2000 years ago. It was made by a learned man
 in a letter to some people he knew in the city of Corinth in what is now Greece.

He said, "We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."

The first thing I would like to say about this startling statement is that we should not infer that things which are transient are unimportant. Without the senses, without food, clothing and shelter, the quality of life is diminished. Rather, we should remember that these things are transient and there is another dimension to life which is eternal. Judging from Paul's writings elsewhere, the eternal includes such things as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. (Galatians 5:22)

A second thing that strikes me about this statement is that it is proof that one of the basic problems of man, namely, What is Real?, was considered over 2000 years ago. In fact we can go back much earlier in history and find some of the most penetrating thoughts on the ultimate questions which are to be found in intellectual thought.

The idea that the major questions for man have existed "time out of mind" and have been the subject of speculation from time immemorial is emphasized by Melvin Rader, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Washington, in a book entitled, The Enduring Questions. As a philosopher, he used the specialized language of his discipline and speaks of the problems of epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and esthetics. Basically, we are talking about the major questions of life. How do we know? What is real?, What is Good?, What is Beautiful?

I stood in the British Museum and looked at a mummy which was some 4000 years old. Here was a man who had lived in what is now called Egypt. He lived, loved, ate, drank. He worked. He played. My guess is that he also thought of the major problems of life. Perhaps he reflected on the eternal questions while observing the star-filled skies at night. We do not have a record as to

how this man expressed his wonder and view of beauty, his sense of power of God, his formulation of the great questions. We do know, however, that his counterpart some few hundred miles away, expressed it this way,

"When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him."

Ps. 8:3

As graduates of Central College, no doubt you have been introduced to some of these great thinkers who have devoted themselves to an examination of the basic problems which have agitated the mind of man over the centuries. Jesus and St. Paul, Plato and Aristotle, St. Augustine, Luther Calvin, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and others; ~~not to mention~~ ^{and} many of the modern writers.

As a third thing I would like to mention today, may be interpreted as a caution, relative to one of the modern trends in thought ~~relative to the~~ ^{concerns a} transient dimension of life. I think it appropriate to give something of a historical perspective for our consideration of this point.

In the Medieval world, men and women acknowledge God as the supreme ruler of the universe and the philosophical systems were built on the assumptions of the ~~Deity~~ ^{Supremacy} of God and the unity of the universe. Modern man has tended to take his eyes away from a vertical gaze toward God and has directed his eyes horizontally to his fellow men and to the physical world.

Jacque Maritain, the modern philosopher, said that, "We are bound to the past in the intellectual order as in every other" and it is "right that we should go some distance into the past in our search for the roots and first germinative principles of the ideas which rule the world today." He identified some of the main currents in contemporary thought as flowing from the seminal work of three philosophers in his book, Three Reformers.

These three reformers, each for very different reasons, dominate the modern world, and govern all the problems that torment it----

Martin Luther-- a reformer of philosophy

Rene Descartes--a reformer of philosophy

Jean Jacque Rousseau--a reformer of morality

We cannot go into an analysis of each but the outcome in each case indicates the modern as opposed to the medieval gaze of man and the redirection of man's view from the heavens the earth.

Martin Luther said, "Here I stand, I can do no other."

Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am."

Rousseau said basically, I must be myself, I will express my own feelings regardless of who it affects.

Maritain ^{said} "Jean, Jacque Rousseau is no mere theorist of the philosophy of feeling. It has often been noticed that he himself (Rousseau) is all feeling. . . . He lives in every fibre of his being, with a kind of heroism, the primary of feeling."

There are many individuals who have been called the first modern. In Political Science we usually refer to Machiavelli. But certainly here we have a strong candidate in Rousseau of an early modern-- and more than that a contemporary modern-- because of his emphasis on the primacy of feeling.

Now feelings are important but if I interpret the meaning of our baseline statement (that things unseen are eternal) feeling would be included in the things that are transient. Transient things are to be regarded with respect and with care but not as having ultimate significance. Each person will have to work out for himself the proper relationship between feeling and intellect.

In our consideration of modern man I would encourage each graduate to consider carefully, in addition to the emergence of feeling-- ^{another factor --} the rise of the amateur.

A few years ago there was a history book entitled, Every Man His Own Historian. Now we have every man his own artist, poet, governor, religious leader-- and what not.

Not long ago the head of the music department at the University of California at Berkely was interviewed. He was asked to account for the emergence of classical music at a particular radio station in Berkely, and the renewed interest in opera and ballet. He replied that he thought as a society we may be coming aware of the limited value of the amateur. He went on to say that most all that was being done in music and art was done by amateurs and had very limited merit.

For purpose of our discussion here this afternoon I will characterize this movement which has brought the amateur to acceptance in almost every phase of life as "pop art." I use this as a general term to refer to pop art, music, literature, government and by amateur I refer to those

1. who do not know the history of the art;
2. who do not have a feel for the nuances of the art;
3. who do not have a long and serious devotion to the art;
4. who do not have a high level of skill in at least one diminsion of the art.

Today most areas of our society are extensively influence by the pop practitioners. Let us consider this assertion in one important dimension of our society-- the national government. (I will surprise you by not talking about elected officials!)

Democratic government was employed by the Greeks some 2500 years ago in a pure democracy. The city-state of Athens was a small community in which the citizens could come together in one meeting, particularly since the slaves and the businessmen were excluded, and the citizens constituted a manageable number. Democracy fell into disuse because they failed to devise a system for popular participation when their number became unmanageable for everyone to participate directly. Through the writings of John Locke in the 17th Century and others the idea of representative government emerged-- that is, the people elect represenatives who act for the ~~people~~^m in the matter of policy decisions. The United States, which came into being in the late 18th Century, was founded on this idea of representative democracy. Graduates of 1980 must learn to live in a society in which we

are attempting to return to a pure democracy through what is called participatory government. But now we are some 230 million people who live over a vast territorial area.

In a sense we are turning to pop government. This is not to say that the results are all bad. The student protests of the 1960's led to a serious consideration of war and the environmentalists have led us to a serious discussion of the limited resources of the earth.

But my point is that in the foreseeable future all American citizens must learn to cope with this redirection of the American democracy-- a move from representative to participatory democracy.

Let us consider another aspect of government for a moment - International Government. In the 17th, 18th and 19th Century the modern nation state emerged and flourished. Two major concepts of the modern nation state include ~~the concept~~ of sovereignty, which means all-powerful, and nationalism, which means that the people have a devotion to their state-- and it is based mainly on feeling. We have attempted to mitigate the undesirable spin-off of these two concepts (one spin-off--being world wars) by the development of international government. In the 19th Century functional international organizations developed and in the 20th Century we have had two main efforts at international government including the League on Nations and the United Nations.

I ask you to consider-- who is more powerful with respect to the Near East today? The United Nations or the PLO?

In International Affairs as in National Affairs we are developing-- pop government.

For purposes of discussion let us accept my set of assumptions-- that the major problems of Man have existed from time immemorial and that each generation has to meet those basic problems in the form they occur in his generation. I

have gone on to state that one problem for the graduates of 1980 is the direction to which they will look for guidance. Modern man tends to take the horizontal view of life and even more particularly look to the feelings of man-- and that as interpreted by amateurs.

Assuming these propositions-- what are some perspectives for a person graduating from a Christian Liberal Arts College such as Central. I will mention three.

#1 I would like to suggest that just as feelings are important but not the most stable element of life in a similar vein-- the amateur may have his day of prominence and may be accepted for a time-- his art, his music, his literature, his efforts to govern may win for a day-- but the history of man seems to indicate that it is the person who will devote himself to serious study, serious effort over extended time who will have the staying power and who will ultimately make a significant contribution to the needs of this world. I invite you to explore the enduring questions of life, not as an amateur, but as a professional devoted to an exploration designed to make life meaningful.

#2 It seems to me that it must have been in the mind of God that men should benefit from the experiences of the past. It appears that God has set for man a rather limited number of major problems and that he has provided a great variety of forms in which those problems will occur. Graduates of a college such as Central have been introduced to the experiences of Man through the ages-- but your college experience has been just that-- an introduction. It seems to me that the serious Central graduate will take this introduction as a start for a lifetime of inquiry so that he will know what God has taught to man through the experiences of the ages. The joys of learning and of knowing have just begun. You can proceed with the full assurance that nothing that is actually True will detract from God.

#3 The Christian faith, which many of you were taught at home and which has been reinforced at Central College, should help you to live out your lives with a measure of stability and even equanimity. (the quality or characteristic of being calm and even-tempered)

A number of Modern philosophies employ a pluralistic concept of the universe and as we have ^{emphasized has} ~~stated there~~ is a preoccupation with the sensations and feeling of man. Both emphases tend toward fragmentation rather than a wholistic view of man and of the universe. In some way you will have to come to terms with these contemporary currents of thought for yourself. Either reject them for a unified view of the universe or else find some way to accept the particulars as being related to the whole. My personal view is that a wholistic view is desirable, first because I think that is the way God intended it, and secondly it seems preferable just for mental health.

Here I am reminded of that great scholar Matthew Arnold who wrote in his sonnet, "To a Friend" with respect to Epictetus, and ^{ancient stoic} ~~early Greek~~ philosopher,

"But be his my special thanks, whose even-balanced soul,
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole."

While on this pilgrimage we also may be certain that we are not alone. We have the reassuring words of Jesus for those who take seriously the pilgrimage of life--
"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the World."

The World-- in extent of territory-- wherever you may go

The World-- in extent of duration-- no matter how long you live

The World-- irrespective of the boundaries of intellectual inquiry-- He will be with you.

And so-- my friends-- I welcome you to the great pilgrimage of life. As the Irish say,

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back,
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
And the rain fall soft upon your fields,
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.