

**TWU Graduation Address 28 April 2007, 9:30 am
Schools of Education, Business, and HKIN, and General Studies**

Your Mind Matters

Dr. Raymond, Dr. Jameson, Faculty Colleagues, Honoured Guests, Families and Friends,

But really this is for you, the graduates. Congratulations. This is your day—the culmination of many years of hard work, self-discipline, and sacrifice. Now you stand at the threshold of the rest of your life.

I have sat at the back of the stage for twenty-two years criticising boring grad speakers and now, in God's irony, I am one, and this is the most difficult speaking assignment I've ever had—and the shortest.

Moreover, I'm an English professor who is not addressing my own faculty here, and I want to be relevant to you:

For the Education grads, it's easier. I have wanted to be a teacher ever since I started grading my dolls' essays when I was six years old (by the way, my class average then was also a C+).

For the Business grads: my son is a residential mortgage manager, and he always says that every Christian family needs at least one capitalist.

For the HKIN grads, you have my eternal admiration for learning and teaching things that people actually WANT to do. So I'm offering to exchange advice about comma splices for ski lessons after the ceremony.

But if I can't give you professional advice about the future, I can sum up the most important lesson from Trinity that you will take into that future in one thesis statement—to paraphrase John Stott:

Your Christian Mind Matters:

I spoke of your sacrifice: you have spent several years and a great deal of money at Trinity. What could possibly justify that? Many of you are going on to professional studies or jobs obtained with your TWU degree. But you know that there are many easier and cheaper places to get academic credentials than this university. Many of you have grown personally and spiritually, have gained lifelong friends and even fiancés here. But you know there are faster and cheaper ways to get friends and take bible studies.

However, and I hope the business grads will believe me (though I can't balance my chequebook), I believe your TWU investment is the most important one you'll ever make; it will pay you dividends for the rest of your life; and it will contribute immeasurably to the world you serve. That's because you have developed a Christian Mind. It is most effectively developed at a Christian University like Trinity. And I truly believe that a Christian Mind is what our society needs more than any other capital.

More than ten years ago, the leading evangelical scholar Mark Noll wrote an article that shook the world of Christian universities; it was called "**The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind.**" He said that the scandal of the evangelical mind is that there isn't one—evangelicals are so concerned with spirituality and evangelism that they aren't interested in scholarship and academics. Evangelical dualism—the separation of mind and spirit—and Evangelical anti-intellectualism are much greater threats to The Christian Mind than the secular world is.

When I came to Trinity 22 years ago, the term Christian University seemed to be something of an oxymoron—a contradiction in terms. In order to prove you were spiritual, you couldn't be a scholarly professor or a serious student. Thankfully, that time is long past. The Faculty here

include some of the best scholars on the continent, and in order to teach here they have to demonstrate that they approach their disciplines with a Christian Mind. Consequently, I can truthfully say what the *Globe and Mail* has just discovered: you have received one of the best undergraduate educations in Canada. AND, what is more important, you have developed an evangelical mind that will no longer be a scandal.

So what is this Christian Mind that is the most important thing you take away from Trinity after all your time and efforts here? It's not defined by an easy slogan, although I like the one that says: "Jesus died to take away your sins, not to take away your mind." The Christian Mind is, of course, what you have learned as Integration of Faith and Learning, a Christological Worldview on your discipline. And, after many years at Trinity you know it is much, much more than a prayer and bible reading at the beginning of a class. It is the life-long dedication to discerning God's Truth in your field. As graduates, you have been given all the same intellectual facts that you would have received at a secular university, but you have also been given the Christian context in which you can begin to analyse, evaluate, and apply those facts within a meaningful framework for an eternal purpose.

As an English professor, I can't tell you what you have spent years learning about Christian integration in your particular discipline. But I can say some general things about Christian Truth and the Christian Mind that have come down to us from greater minds.

Arthur Holmes wrote a seminal book on integration: *All Truth Is God's Truth*. In it he points out that, unlike much of the postmodern academy, Christians believe that absolute Truth exists, although we mortals only "see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12). Therefore,

because God's Truth is knowable—intelligible and purposeful—we have a moral imperative to learn all we can of his revelation in the arts and sciences. Because God's Truth is absolute—eternal and unchanging—there are moral truths and ethical norms by which we can judge empirical facts. And because God's Truth is unified, there is no division between secular and sacred, mind and spirit—no evangelical dualism.

The most important thing about God's Truth is that it is personal. Christ said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Truth identified with the Person of God means we must care about Truth with honesty and passion, without fear or favour, and without ideological blinkers or utopian fairytales. Whether it's native residential schools or troops in Afghanistan, non-competition payments or gun control laws, we must care about the Truth of the people who govern us, the people who serve us, and the Truth of our own positions. I know there is often a public outcry and media frenzy about these complex issues, but how often are the opinions motivated by personal or political self-interest?

Jesus said: “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31-32). What kind of freedom does your Christian Mind give you? Our secular society usually defines truth as utilitarianism and freedom as materialism? But Christian freedom is the freedom to have responsibility. We do not have the freedom of postmodern indeterminacy whose response to every value-judgement is “whatever.” As Christians we are responsible to care about Truth as we care about God: to accumulate evidence as fairly, to think through issues as objectively, and to arrive at truth as honestly as we can, and then to witness to it regardless of our own self-interest.

Christians are a minority in our culture. We gratefully recognise that—by common grace—many other groups also speak for truth and justice. But, as the British theologian

Harry Blamires said, there are certain marks of *The Christian Mind* that distinguish it from other ethical and religious perspectives. Blamires warned Christians against living their lives spiritually and morally while surrendering their minds to a secular worldview. For Blamires, to think Christianly means that our worldview relates everything, directly or indirectly, to our eternal destiny as God's redeemed children.

In addition to the concept of absolute and revealed truth, Blamires gives five other characteristics of the Christian mind (and unfortunately I can only list them briefly here): FIRST a supernatural orientation; SECOND an awareness of human sin and evil; THIRD an acceptance of the divine basis for authority; FOURTH a basic concern for the person as created and redeemed by God; and FIFTH a sacramental view that celebrates the holy in the daily.

Most importantly, it does not matter if Christians don't all agree on their conclusions; we could transform our world if all Christians could be educated, as you have been, to reflect intelligently and theologically not only about personal moral behaviour, but also about political and professional issues. This is NOT a call to support the Religious Right—fundamentalism too often relies on simple formulae instead of critical thinking and political coercion in place of rational discourse. This is a call to do the difficult and ongoing work of Christian integration.

I said that my Christian mind cannot give you answers in your disciplines. But maybe I can give you some questions. Business grads: where do you stand on the ever-increasing gap between rich and poor in our world? HKIN grads: how do we promote a healthy lifestyle without worshipping the body or idolising sports? Education grads: what is the teaching praxis that reflects a Biblical view of knowledge and people?

Finally, let me briefly address the spiritual concerns of evangelicals who are afraid of the Christian University and the Christian Mind because they are afraid intellectual pride will weaken our faith and trust in God. As Arthur Holmes said, “the cure for intellectual pride is not ignorance. . . it is a little knowledge and not a lot that is a dangerous thing.” Jesus said: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37). Your Christian mind does not separate you from God, but rather it integrates you with God and His Will for your life. I guarantee you one thing after you leave the “Trinity Bubble” today: your life will NOT turn out as you now expect. Much of it will be better; some of it may be worse. But only God knows and controls what your life will be. And I tell you now—as a 62 year old wife, mother, and professor, with terminal cancer, who is alive to address you today only by the grace of God—that whatever comes, the only hope you have is to trust with the mind God has given you what you KNOW is true, even if you don’t always feel it: and that is that He has created, redeemed, and sustains you for His eternal purposes.

In the Anglican Church, every communion service ends with this prayer: “the peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and keep your minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Peace and understanding, hearts and minds, knowledge and love are integrated in God’s purposes for you. “May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be amongst you and remain with you always.” AMEN

