

SENATOR MARK O. HATFIELD  
Article for "Life"  
George Fox College

"Christian Higher Education"

Christian higher education, as exemplified by George Fox College, provides young people with qualities that every profession and organization seek. As a former college professor, one of the most pleasurable aspects of being a Senator is the opportunity I have to meet with students in my office in Washington, on campuses in Oregon, and at universities around the country.

Some people have characterized the present student generation as lacking idealism, interested only in lucrative jobs and material security. However, for all the talk about rampant materialism, I find thousands of young people from schools like George Fox who possess characteristics that enable them to work vigorously for causes in which they believe.

One of the ~~first~~ qualities I find in George Fox students is an understanding of Scriptures and their application to our lives and our society. We have too many young people who have gone to Sunday School all their life, who have memorized the Beatitudes, the Ten Commandments, the Books of the Bible, but who fall woefully short in their capacity to apply God's truth to the new issues and decisions which come to them.

What we should see in a graduate of an evangelical college is a capacity to make moral decisions based on a firm standard. How is it that the principals in the Watergate fiasco were extremely well-educated, but could see no wrong in their actions? How could the officials in Hitler's Germany go to the Brahms recitals and the lectures, then issue the orders sending thousands to the gas chambers? The problem has been compartmentalization. And evangelical young people are peculiarly tempted along these lines.

A lot of attention has been devoted to discussing the accuracy of the Scriptures. The problem with that debate is it tends to draw lines and cause divisions. It also diverts us from our task of applying the Scripture. Most participants in the debate agree on the authority of the Bible as God's revealed Word. What we need to do is begin there and go on to apply every part of the Scripture to life's issues.

Secondly, I find young people at George Fox who have a coherent and defensible world view. I do not look for a uniform set of ideas and concepts. Too many of our churches and colleges have

been "cookie cutter" institutions. They have turned out a young person with a predictable, orthodox set of ideas, but have not created an environment in which ideas are developed and tested, so that they can be defended.

In John Milton's classic, Paradise Lost, there is a passage in which Satan is speaking to his fellow fallen angels. They are floating on their backs in the fiery waters of hell. Satan declares, "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven." These lines have a certain ring to them, as do all expressions of near-truth. But we find in them one of the great failings of secular humanism and of humanistic education. Its products in society are moral confusion, rootless individualism and uncompassionate isolationism.

The graduate of George Fox College has something better to offer. He or she has a reference point for truth, a place to begin. There is the willingness to subject every concept and idea, even the existence of God, to discussion and honest doubt. The "hot house" Christian young person who has never done this will flounder in the real world, which is filled with skeptics and practicing pagans. We do no favors to spoon feed to our youth the beliefs and ideas which we hold.

By a world view I mean a coherent framework of ideas into which new insights can be fit. A part of this set of ideas should be a notion of what is most valuable in life. For many people, the ultimate goal is the amassing and consuming of material things. In rejecting such an inadequate goal, we may begin to develop a dualistic view. We may begin to think of the material world as being evil in itself. That view clashes with the words in Genesis, "and God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good," (Genesis 1:31). The other part of that truth is the unavoidably direct statement in the Sermon on the Mount, "you cannot serve God and mammon," (Matthew 6:24).

Thirdly, I find George Fox students can express themselves effectively. One of the casualties of a generation reared on TV is insufficient reading of our great literature and a lack of exposure to language in its best use. We have seen downward trends in standardized test scores and have seen other indications of declining literacy. But intellectual shallowness and the lack of a capacity to articulate ideas are not new.

The great 19th century American historian, Francis Parkman, observed that the product of inadequate education is "a prodigious number of persons who think, and persuade others to think that they know everything to be known, and are fully competent to form opinions and make speeches upon all questions whatever." What Parkman is describing is glibness, throwing words around to hide

ignorance. No adeptness in the use of language can substitute for thoughtful analysis. One of the drawbacks of our instant news media is the lack of careful thought.

Fourthly, I find in George Fox students persons who have a balance of compassion and discipline. On the discipline side are the task-oriented people. They work very hard, get things done on time, are performance-oriented. They are great at details, following instructions, doing it right. On the other side are the compassionate persons, who are people-oriented, not task-oriented. They will quickly drop their work to relate to a person with needs, or who just wants to talk. Their strong point is sensitivity, seeing past the mechanics of the job to real people.

I'm sure you have dealt with people who have gone too far in one direction or the other. The compassionate person may miss their deadlines on work that simply has to be done. The disciplined person may get their work done, but in a sterile manner, ignoring the needs around them.

It takes a great deal of maturity to balance discipline and compassion. For the housewife, there is a sinkful of dirty dishes, but the neighbor dropping by needing to talk about a decaying marriage. For the college president, the young faculty members who need to step out of the role of subordinate and share openly about their doubts and frustrations. For the bureaucrat, there is the opportunity to look away from the piles of paperwork long enough to render genuine service to people overwhelmed by the massive government.

Finally, I find in George Fox students a capacity to grasp the issues in a situation and relate values to them. I have never been a crusader for people to find their vocation in politics, though we always will need more people of vision and integrity. But it is useless for us to proclaim the virtues of democracy, if we let other people think through the issues.

Part of the reason for the hysteria on the Panama Canal treaties was the relinquishing of responsibility by many. I heard from fewer than one percent of Oregonians on the treaties. Yet, people will tell me that I should do precisely what the majority of my letters say.

The issues which we are called to address are not confined to the political world. In medicine, there are hard questions about the nature of life and to what extent we should protect it. In business, there are hard ethical questions which we are now addressing. In every field, the issues abound. Our task is to face them, to be the prophetic voices to our colleagues and our generation.

In the fourth chapter of Ephesians (4:12-15) Paul suggests a number of the qualities I have been mentioning:

"His gifts were made that Christians might be properly equipped for their service, that the whole body might be built up until the time comes when, in the unity of common faith and common knowledge of the Son of God, we arrive at real maturity -- that measure of development which is meant by 'the fullness of Christ.'

We are not meant to remain as children at the mercy of every chance wind of teaching and the jockeying of men who are expert in the crafty presentation of lies. But we are meant to hold firmly to the truth in love, and to grow up in every way into Christ, the head."

I am thankful that George Fox College is committed to these qualities, and is an institution which exemplifies Christian higher education.