

Remarks by the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at the Johns Hopkins University 100th Commemoration Weekend, Baltimore, Maryland, on Saturday, February 21, 1976

If one were to ask ten years ago what society at large can expect for and from the American university, the answer would have been quite different than today. Ten years ago, American society regarded their universities from the height of optimism. This optimism had been nurtured by the universities themselves, who began to believe that they could find the answers to all of society's current problems.

World development is and was an almost intractable problem, but the universities met it head-on. Four Midwestern universities alone had almost four hundred faculty members working in all corners of the world. Most of them are back home today. They worked hard at the problems they found, but the problems remain, are often exacerbated by new factors, and most of the visiting wise men have returned to their universities.

The problems at home were almost as bad. The faculties, administration, and students were about to demonstrate that universities could not answer their own problems that gripped them internally as the country struggled with an escalating war that was both unpopular and unwinnable. Widespread poverty in the midst of affluence was the scene of another domestic war that was being lost in a miasma of racism and prejudice, despite

the guiding presence of so many academics and academically inspired programs.

When the widespread malaise erupted at the center, within the universities themselves, the wise men looked at each other and at their students with dismay and alarm. That civility that had long characterized rational discourse within the university community was abruptly replaced by an unprecedented barbarism. Students at one of our premier universities sat^{at} the President's desk, read his mail, ransacked his files, smoked his cigars, drank his sherry, and defecated on his rug. Academic buildings were defaced and burned, professorial manuscripts, the long careful labor of many years, were destroyed, classes were struck, professors publicly insulted, a veritable academic reign of terror ensued.

For centuries, the universities had nurtured rationality and civility as a way of life. Now they were engulfed by irrationality and violence, the jungle invaded the groves of academe and those who had spent their lives in the gentle pursuit of education and research were seized by the urgent business of physical, mental, and moral survival.

Some blamed it on the times; some on a post-war over-extension of the universities into the realm of local, national, and international service over and above their educational and research functions that had tripled in size during two brief decades. Even the basic educational and research functions were dismissed by the new revolutionaries as irrelevant to the times.

History became despised as if the world began at nine o'clock each morning. Science and technology, long the new wave of future hope, became overnight the new harbingers of the ultimate death and destruction of the universe. Beauty was simply effete. Boorishness and ugliness, in dress and manners, became the new order of the day. As illustrious presidents and deans were toppled, there was a search for riot managers to replace them. Anarchy overtook and demolished what for centuries had been the life of reason and order. Moreover, the disease was catching, and all too quickly spread worldwide. Finally, the war wound down, the draft ceased, the Civil Rights laws of the sixties changed the mores of America going back to the days of slavery, and the true child of Vietnam, economic depression, struck America and the world. Now it was the students' turn to worry about survival and peace came to the campus, almost as suddenly as the revolution had arrived.

No sooner had a modicum of order been restored when a new and deeper disorder appeared. Those who were most central to the university, her faculty and graduates, were shown to be among the best and the brightest who had orchestrated the despicable war, had given most of the bad advice. Then came Watergate, which was perpetrated by hucksters who were all products of some of our best universities, men who had all the techniques and none of the substance, guile without wisdom, expedient goals without lasting values.

No one really escaped, not the scientist or engineers who fashioned the horrible weapons, not the military who used them to destroy simple villages in order to save them, not the social scientists who devised new social schemes to integrate our schools and save our cities only to see both go up in flames, not the faculties that were turned upon by the very students they were trying to educate, not the humanists who seemed helpless in stemming the tide of inhumanity.

Today we have been purged by all of this blood-letting of the past decade. We now, I believe, face the future with more modesty, and, I would hope, greater clarity of purpose. Experience and history do educate us if we take time to ponder the painful lesson.

Today society expects less of us than the salvation of the world, the answer to every possible problem, the panacea for a new utopia. We have learned, both society and the universities, that values are important: personal values, family values, business and professional values, national and international values. Freedom requires personal discipline, power can be dangerous without wisdom, knowledge is a fickle adornment of persons without character, technique can only bring death and destruction more quickly if ungoverned by civilized goals.

I believe that society expects today that we in the universities have learned these lessons from the past decade, and further that we are prepared to incorporate what we have

learned in our personal lives as educators, as well as in the lives of those we seek to educate in the university. We will continue to serve society, I trust, but more meaningfully and in keeping with more modest goals which, despite their modesty, happen to be essential for the survival of our society.