This convocation officially opens the tenth academic year of the University of Dallas. For the historical record, I should point out that our charter is much older than that, dating back to 1910. Under this charter the University of Dallas existed for a dozen years in a handsome, huge structure on Oak Lawn, later occupied by Jesuit High School. There are many proud graduates of that institution around who love to reminisce about the old school. But there came a time when the Vincentian order, who ran the University, found the going difficult and turned the charter and name of the University of Dallas over to the safekeeping of the Diocese where it lay dormant for thirty years; thus it was preserved for us, a good name to grace a new institution set on a hill overlooking the city. Because it has been thus preserved, I can declare that the University of Dallas, operating under a fifty-five year old charter, now officially
opens for its tenth academic year since its reorganization.

The enrollment for this tenth year stands at 840, more than twenty percent above last fall, and almost half of our eventual undergraduate enrollment of 1800. The freshman class is again a well qualified class, and is, I suspect, although we do not yet have comparative figures, for the third successive year second in the state in college board scores. The retention rate for students is now quite high as befits a good school with good students; the present senior class is the last to experience a high attrition rate, having entered the University as second in size only to the present entering class and leaving next May as one of our smaller classes; it was a class which came in with no clear understanding of the purposes of this institution, with many of the members short on ability or desire to do the work set before them. Most of these are doing well elsewhere and, happily, I can say, those that are left with us form an excellent senior class which doubtless will again win the scholarships and honors previous classes have won.

The new building will be ready for occupancy in two weeks, although the special seating will not be in from England until December; the benches on the porch were a late inspiration which I hope you will enjoy; it seems to me a gem of a building embodying tradition and modernity in the spirit of our University. A little later we shall announce the date of ground-breaking for the Graduate Building and later in the year
the plans for the gymnasium.

The University's financial position is sound with a net worth of 12.5 million dollars. I might point out to you that a resident student costs the University almost two thousand dollars; the difference between that amount and the charges for room, board, and tuition represent a sizeable gift to you and a financial problem for the University -- one that grows larger as enrollment increases. A wise and generous Board of Trustees worries about this problem, as it does many others in guiding this University toward its destiny of greatness.

Presenting to you this kind of information is part of the function of the Fall Convocation. Traditionally it is the time when the President gives a state-of-the-university address and goes on to define, in perhaps hazy and imprecise terms, the aims and functions of this university at this particular time in history. The state of the University is good -- something we can now say in conscious understatement without fear of misunderstanding. The statistics bear us out. But more than that, there is an air of confidence one senses now that, given this excellent faculty, the direction this university chose to take several years ago is, indeed, the right one for this time and place.

The University of Dallas is a school for leaders. You have come to this place because you wish to be given a sound education -- because you have a bigger than ordinary job to do.
You have a public function to perform. It is an interesting and seemingly paradoxical thing that those educational theorists who are concerned primarily with the economic function of education and emphasize mere training to fill particular jobs state their ultimate goal as "the welfare of individuals and the quality of their lives", (as a report of the Committee for Economic Development put it last week,) whereas those who believe in a liberal arts, religiously oriented education recognize that the function of education is not primarily personal and private but is always cultural, that is, an activity performed by society for social ends. Christopher Dawson says "culture is inseparable from education." He points out that it was education that preserved Chinese culture, causing it to persist and eventually dominate over every invader, at least until recent times, because on each occasion the conquerors were obliged to use the services of the scholars, without whom the administration of the empire could not be carried on. But Eastern education was confined to a priestly caste, he notes, whereas in Greece - in the West - it formed an integral part of the community.

I do not mean to make too much of a point of the civic nature of education in the West, because certainly the encouragement of philosophical and spiritual development has not been directed solely toward social ends, but I do say there was a very early recognition that in Western civilization the development of these qualities in men provided the leaders for society. The nature of
education is public, and be that education the training of punch
card operators or of poets, it is the welfare of society, far
more than the satisfaction of the individual, that is at stake.
The University of Dallas recognizes this public function and has
set about the task of producing leaders for society.

By coming to this place you have been called to leadership.
Perhaps, like Tarwater in The Violent Bear It Away, you "ain't
yet got the call", but here in this wilderness, this Powderhead,
it awaits you. In speaking to the freshmen a few days ago I
mentioned that the college experience was not a plunging into
the world but a withdrawal from it — a time of preparation, a
time of contemplation while the forms of existence present them-
selves, while patterns appear, values emerge, and a habit of
mind is gradually assumed. It is important for society that you
be provided with this refuge, and it is incumbent on a college
to provide it. I think it was with something of this thought in
mind that Alfred North Whitehead wrote "A well planned University
course is a study of the wide sweep of generality." It is a
view from the mountaintop, a philosophical view, sharpened by
a spotter's telescope in order to make every detail available
but fitting together into one giant scheme. It is this kind of
well planned curriculum you are experiencing at the University
of Dallas. We mean for it to be a contemplative experience;
we should like for it to be leisurely, but there is no time for
sloth. There is no time for going back to do the things one
should have done before; the first year must not be wasted in going over the old work in the old ways. One must step suddenly into the college experience.

Perhaps I should clarify what I mean by contemplation. A poem is understood in contemplation. It takes hard work, close analysis, a tedious unraveling of syntax, a scholarly search for reference, a real struggle; but the poem is finally understood in contemplation. So, too, is physics. Certainly physics! The model that evolves out of a vast quantity of information is an object of contemplation, created by contemplation, and strangely enough, communicated by contemplation. To learn about the atom as fact is to miss the point of physics; to contemplate the structure of physical reality is quite another thing. The essence of contemplation is the submission of the self to the object before one, to take it on its terms, not to impose some outside scheme, however grand, upon the object. As one theologian has written, "It is not the job of the theologian to 'pass judgement' on any piece of writing which has claims to be considered a work of art. Rather the theologian has the responsibility, and the need, to seek to stand in the same relationship to a work of art as any other man who is seeking sensibility and integrity ... An authentic work of art does not so much stand to be judged by us as stands in judgement over us ... Thus, questions, say, of moral and doctrinal 'orthodoxy' do not, or at least should not, arise during the moment of our contact
with a work of art. We are simply to be open to whatever illumination the work has to give us concerning the reality of things."

There is always a danger that the acceptance of one discipline will block our view from another. I learned early that a physicist can kill any party if he sets out to make an explanation when someone remarks "Isn't that marvelous! I wonder how it works," about television or rainbows or missiles or love. Now, of course, I mean something more than that a party situation deserves party talk. It is not that the philosopher must hold his tongue in the face of the atom or the poem; it is, in fact, his duty to be the critic of knowledge. But he must not let his own system of thought obscure the knowledge inherent in the object of contemplation. You, then, as students, must take each course on its own terms, acquiring the knowledge each has to give in the manner it has to offer. You must then fit these various parts together into a single unity.

In the task of unifying your knowledge, you are fortunate in being at this particular institution, for, to a degree unusual in our day, this university has a concept of a formed education. There is an order to knowledge, there is a structure to learning which we would be remiss in not presenting to you. I was, in a mild sort of way, appalled to read in a recent educational journal the statement by the president of one our leading Catholic women's colleges that her institution required no par-
ticular courses for a degree because the student needed to learn the responsibility of choice. What a triumph of Victorianism! What a misreading of the tempo of our times! There are many opportunities for the student to exercise his responsibility of choice — in the very choice of a college, in the selection of a major discipline, in countless decisions. But to imply that there is not an objective structure to education would be to do the student a great disservice.

Education is made up of information, but volumes of information do not make an education. It would be impossible to give a student sufficient information to make him of much value to society — impossible and pointless, with libraries and now computers to store and retrieve facts. It is the symbolic arrangement of information that is significant — arrangement which conveys meaning, which sets the matrix for new information, which provides the springboard for the leap of the imagination into the unknown. Those of you who have been with us a few years can testify to this process. You have seen the sequence of philosophy courses add up to a single structure. You have seen some fifty or sixty pieces of literature come together in a strongly interacting field of reference so that Achilles owes as much to Lord Jim as Conrad does to Homer. You have seen philosophy look at literature and literature at philosophy, and history and economics and politics and art and math and science all fit together into a
coherent whole. It may be that an individual student can make this integration on any campus; but the level of activity, the conversation and the originality shift to a higher plane when a whole campus has had the same ordered experience.

Last year on a panel discussion one of the students asked if our kind of education did not produce stereotypes; Professor Willmoore Kendall snorted back, "I should hope so." He was, as usual, of course, being deliberately provocative in his reply; it is not stereotypes that a liberal education produces -- but it is men who are alike in being civilized and free. And it is only order -- resulting from a concentration on the objective nature of truth -- that allows a person to be free. The high degree of individualism represented by our faculty is both testimony and insurance for independent thought. It is the disordered life that tends toward conformity. The professor with whom I share at times room and board was musing the other day on our own past experiences and wondering why it was, with our non-conformist inclinations, we had not become "behemian," as our generation called it, or beatnik or camp, or whatever one calls it now. She decided that it was because of the terrible sameness of the rebels -- having to like the same writers, the same cliches, the same folksingers -- internally, it was too restricted a life.

If freedom is to mean anything, it must be exercised on the whole field of knowledge which man has acquired; if freedom
is to persist, it must be part of the structure of values man has discovered.

The purpose of the University of Dallas is to continue and preserve this structure of values; to serve Western culture by providing it leaders; to imbue with a strong liberal arts education the young men and women who will become the scholars, the poets, the scientists, the teachers, the business and professional men of our communities. Part of that education is a thorough grounding in one of the major disciplines at the undergraduate level, and later the professional preparation at the graduate level. This University has no intention of producing dilettantes, people who toy with cultural pursuits for amusement. But it is most concerned that there be an increasing harmony in daily activities. The great vitality which comes from the interaction of the disciplines is made possible by a common fund of understanding. That is what the University of Dallas provides you. That is why you have been withdrawn for a time from the world to this campus, to this refuge, where you can learn, as the young Tarwater did, "Figures, Reading, Writing, and History beginning with Adam expelled from the Garden and going down through the presidents to Herbert Hoover and on in speculation toward the Second Coming and the Day of Judgement." There is much to be learned; fortunately there is a coherent structure for its transmission.

The structure is the liberal arts tradition -- a great vital
continuum flowing up to our time from the past, yet thoroughly alive and relevant to our contemporary cultural crisis. It is a Western structure, it is a religious structure, it is specifically a Christian structure. The American idea of education, which we are coming to see as a much grander concept that our modesty was willing to admit a few years ago, is most certainly Christian. In the last score of years secularism has attacked that idea, biting away incessantly like the second law of thermodynamics, to devolve and degenerate the structure. At the very time in history when a new synthesis of the physical, the philosophical and the literary sciences is possible, an adequate religion is being withdrawn from the houses of learning. Such a loss could lead to the destruction of Western civilization. If, however, sufficient leaders are provided who have formed this synthesis, held together and made one by the mighty cohesion of Christianity, our culture can soar into one of the great periods of history. There are few places in the country capable of producing these leaders. Here, on this campus, by the grace of God, is one. Let us not hide our faces from that grace.