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; 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 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 very well-qualified class, and is, I suspect, although I 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, coming in 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 very special seating will not be in until December; the benches on the porch were a late inspiration which I hope you appreciate; it seems to me a gem of a building and I am grateful to the architects for an imaginative and handsome structure. 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. We shall not build new dormitories during the year, and, since our enrollment will take an even larger jump next year, we shall be short on this kind of space — something you might bear in mind at reservation time next spring.

The University's financial position is sound. 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 and board and tuition represent a sizeable gift to you and a financial problem for the University — one that grows larger as enrollment increases. A very 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 are in some way special — 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 see the 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 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 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 utilitarian ends, but I do say there was a very early recognition that the development of these qualities in men provided the temporal leaders for society. The nature of education is public, and be that education the training of punch card operators or of posts, it is the welfare of society, not 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 Turwater, 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 themselves, while patterns appear, and a habit of mind is 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 spotters 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 liesurely, but there is no time for sloth. There is no time for going back to do the things one should have done before; as Whitehead wrote, "it is fatal if the first year at the university be frittered away in going over the old work in the old spirit." 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 to understand a poem and the poem finally is 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 in on its terms, not to impose some outside scheme, however grand, upon the object. The theologian David Jenkins has said, "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 sensistivity 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 it 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 form in 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 of our better Catholic women's colleges that her institution required no particular courses for a degree because the student needed to learn the responsibility of choice. What a triumph for 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 a structure to education would be to do the student a great disservice.

Education is made up of information, but information does 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 — arrangements which convey meaning, which set the matrix for new information, which provide 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 fifth 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 level 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 Kendal snorted back, "I should hope so." He was, of course, being provocative in his reply; it is only knowledge - structured knowledge that allows a person to be free. I can illustrate this point with a conversation I had with a recent visitor to my office who had a theory in astrophysics although he had not gone beyond the fourth grade in school. He had spent ten years on the theory; he told me, and had managed to do rather cleverly by arithmetic something which could be done easily by calculus. Had he spent his time in acquiring the mathematics, the mechanics, the ballistics, and the nuclear physics involved in his theory, his freedom would have been seriously impaired and the theory would never have been born, but he would be free in a way he has not been for these past ten years. If freedom is to mean anything, it must be exercised on the field of knowledge 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 serve the culture
by providing it leaders, to give a strong liberal arts education, penetrated by values to the young men and women who will become the scholars, 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 dilletantes, 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 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 Judgment." There is much to be learned; fortunately, there is a form to contain it.