

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Garner Ted Armstrong

Date: 1/30/78

Subject: Ambassador College: Purpose, Objectives, Focus

From: Robert Kuhn

Ambassador College is clearly at a cross-roads. Never before has its overall academic quality been so high, yet never before has its purpose, objectives, and indeed its very existence, been subjected to so much controversy and criticism.

Factionalism exists on many levels. Within the college, the leadership of the academic staff and student affairs staff have fundamental disagreements on the direction of the college, and the theological faculty is divided on the basic philosophical approach to the Bible. The student-oriented staff see the fragmented intellectual objectives of some faculty members as non-supportive of the church, while the academic-oriented staff see this anti-intellectual fear as an anachronistic throwback to a by-gone age thereby being equally non supportive of the church. The results of these overt conflicts have ricocheted throughout the faculty and student body with debilitating and demoralizing effects. Often discussed as a "Big Sandy-Pasadena" confrontation, the issue in fact goes far deeper.

In the college's relationship with the church, the trouble is even more profound. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong has been questioning the importance of the college to the church. The legal office of the church and college is locked in a seemingly irreconcilable conflict with the academic administration regarding the steps necessary for accreditation as well as the ultimate objectives of the institution. More critically, the entire staff of the church business office is greatly disturbed by what they consider to be enormous financial expenditures generated by wasteful duplication of efforts imposed under the artificial guise of "separation" of church and college. Throughout all of this, "accreditation" has become the all-important watch-word of the day, the focal point of many arguments. This is indeed unfortunate since the truly important subject of the purpose, objectives and focus of the college goes unresolved, of ten even undiscussed.

The growing questioning of Ambassador College by the ministry of the church is a real, very serious phenomenon that must be understood and not ignored or driven underground. It is triggered by many church employees in Pasadena and is self-generated as well. The question, at its heart, is not so much the "secularization" of the college but rather what is the value of the college for the church, especially in light of its proportionally high financial allocations, and the increasing desire on everyone's part to see more funds allocated to the church's primary objectives: electronic and print media. Gone are the days when a large percentage of college graduates were directly absorbed into the Work after graduation. Since this was once the sole stated objective of Ambassador College--i.e. "the West Point of God's Work"--and since it is not true today and probably never will be again (in the same sense), there is little wonder that questions are arising from many quarters.

When all taken together, it is generally acknowledged that Ambassador College is making an uncertain sound at best and floundering at worst. Exemplifying this loss of confidence in the future, key administrative and faculty personnel openly talk of sending out resumes and/or changing their occupations within the Work.

Yet the irony of all this is that never before has Ambassador College been so CRITICALLY IMPORTANT for the ultimate success of the Church in its manifold responsibilities in this age.

The problem in the college is not deciding who is right and who is wrong—which faction best represents the true way—but rather to firmly focus and direct the college in accomplishing its overall purpose of fully supporting the church in innovative and sophisticated ways absolutely vital in the 1980s.

In order to firmly establish the rightful place of the college as an integral part of the overall Work of the Church, a definite and aggressive program must be planned and implemented. We are not dealing with mere questions of form and publicity, but we are in fact addressing the fundamental problems of substance and reality.

Once the purpose of the college is clearly articulated and accepted by the leadership of the church, then an overall plan must be formulated to accomplish the stated objectives (with 2, 3, 5, 10, etc., year benchmarks). Strong coherent and consistent leadership is then needed to forge the dream into reality, and wide, effective publicity about the true value of the college for the church must be actively circulated among the ministry and brethren. Yet to try to improve the "image" of the college among the church without correcting the internal difficulties and establishing the true worth of the college for the church would be quickly recognized as "whitewashing" and simply create a "credibility gap." There are too many lines of communication between headquarters and the field, and too many areas of contention between church and college for anything less than substantive change to remedy the situation. Mere public relations words or cosmetic changes in appearance will not solve the problem.

Yet the problem can be solved, and the college can become recognized as a fundamental part of the foundation of the church, more critically important to the ultimate success of the Work in the future than it ever has been in the past.

During our last accreditation visit, Dr. Thomas told us both (and myself privately as well) that the college is not only revelant for the prosperity of the church, it will become absolutely essential for the very survival of the church. (Dr. Thomas used the Mormon Church as his example, but the analogy is a very close fit to God's Church.) Gone are the days, he mused, when physical sacrifice—deprivation, energy exhaustion and martyrdom—were critical for the church.

The battlefields of the future will be mental, requiring intellectual and scholarly skills. Those who seek to expend themselves by dedication and commitment alone will be brushed aside with a contemptuous flick of the wrist. Dedication and commitment will always be required by the church, but in the 1980s it must be accompanied by great intellectual skill and professional competence. Nothing else will suffice. Dr. Thomas' words had a profound effect on me. I had always supported the college, but at that point I suddenly saw a whole new reality.

The battles of the church will be fought in the minds of man, and the weapons must therefore be intellectual and scholarly. The issues will be multitudinous: legal with Church and State as adversaries in a struggle for survival; doctrinal, with antagonistic religious organizations seeking to ridicule and destroy; historical, political, psychological and scientific, with the concepts of the church needing solid scholarly development and support.

The recent questions of the "secular drift" of the college and/or the "church control" of the college are tragic and absurd. Not tragic because the questions are unsubstantiated, but rather because the questions themselves evidence a lack of understanding of what the college must accomplish for the church. Not absurd because the problem is non-existent, but rather because of the negative approach of the questions evinces the naive simplicity of the 1950s. "Church control," by its very sound, connotes a situation where the college is like a pack of wild stallions ready to run wildly off if not restrained. "Secular drift" implies that the faculty implicitly desire to throw off the shackles of church teaching. True intellectuality and scholarship is mistakenly compartmentalized by many in the opposing factions we see in the college today. Some are intimidated by scholarly pursuits; others utilize it to enhance their own independence at the expense of the church. This means that a real problem does exist, with both sides misdirected, yet with both sides having part of the truth.

In plain fact, the college should not have to be controlled by the church; the college should be so clearly in the vanguard supporting the church on every intellectual subject and in every scholarly discipline that there should never be any question as to the value of the college for the church.

There must be no question of the intrinsic worth of the college, and there is only one way for this to happen. The college must uphold and expand the academic foundation of the church in all areas. And it must do so with dedication, commitment, intensity, and a brilliantly sharp focus.

The objectives of Ambassador College must be to clearly and unmistakably support and expand, vigorously and rigorously, the teachings of the Worldwide Church of God at the highest levels of professional competence and scholarly thought. This must be the college's distinctiveness and its strength; indeed this must become its sole raison d'etre.

Today this is not as true as it should be. Recognizing this fact, many in the church call for a de-emphasis of intellectual/scholarly endeavors in the college and a return to more traditional ways. Such archaic attitudes indeed highlights a problem, but fall far short of recognizing the real solution. The intellectual/scholarly product of the college must become far greater, surely not be diminished; but it must be fully focused to benefit, uphold and augment the power of the church, and just as surely not remain fragmented, aloof and independent.

Ambassador College must become the leader in the church's battle for survival, prosperity and growth. The 1980s are far different from the 1950s—the intellectual level of mankind as a whole and the Western world in particular is enormously higher in every field and area. To exist the Worldwide Church of God must aggressively compete in the free market place of ideas; in the arena of concept vs. concept, the teachings of the church must have solid academic support. (Loud

sermons, ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, many explanation points!!!!, are no longer sufficient.) Ideas and concepts must be ready to stand up against withering intellectual attacks in the media and the community. Of course, we have God's truth, but God has left it in our hands to present it as competently as possible. Our ministry and our brethren will require competent support. To do any less than our best dishonors God. And in forming the intellectual foundation of the church, the purpose of the college must emerge with more piercing relevance in the 1980s than it ever had in the 1950s.

activities for The relationship between college and the Work of the church can be likened to that of physics and engineering, pure math to applied math, physiology to medicine, basic science to technology. In other words, the college should develop and perfect the basic intellectual ideas and concepts, and then the media of the church should translate and apply them in the most effective presentation to the world. The subject matter explodes across the broad front of theology, history, international relations, human understanding, character-development, education, science, health, the environment, etc.

The college must become not only the vehicle for the education of the church and its leadership but it must also start producing sophisticated scholarly support for the church through competent and professional research and thought.

The college must emphasize those areas of direct relevance to the church. All scholarly efforts must be focused for the full benefit of the church. The church cannot afford to build a university or even a college to compete with the thousands that already exist in almost every city in the educated world. Such is not even desirable even if we could more afford it. Ambassador College has always been unique. It must continue to be unique, not by de-emphasizing academics and certainly not by expanding physical plant, but by focusing its educational environment and its intellectual product to fully support the full range of concepts and ideas inherent in the Worldwide Church of God.

I would define the above-stated overall purpose of Ambassador College into five general categories. (Note that it is at least partially because the third, fourth and fifth categories are never mentioned that many in the church now question the viability of the college!)

1) Education of the Church's Young People

The church has a responsibility to educate its young people, and with increasing thousands now being encouraged to remain faithful to the church through Y.O.U., the relevance of the college is likewise increasing.

2) Education of the Church's Future Leadership

In less than a decade, the full college student body will take its place as the new leadership of the church in every congregation throughout the world thereby yielding thousands of strong pillars inside the church as well as potential workers and witnesses outside the church. We must plan for the future, and the longer time goes on, the more vital the role of the college as the number of its graduates increase.

3) Providing the Intellectual/Scholarly Support of the Church

As stated above, the college must be at the forefront of the Work of the church. The college must become the academic leading edge of the church by supplying the basic content and creativity for the media efforts of the church. The college must not be viewed as an "appendage" to be "controlled" but rather as a vital life-giving organ essential for survival. But this can only happen with decisive and detailed leadership, directing all programs and activities for the direct benefit of the church.

4) Generating Intellectual/Scholarly Recognition for the Church

It is essential that Ambassador College begin to establish research programs, institutes and journals that will bring scholarly credit to the church in those areas of direct relevance. BYU, for example, has an "Institute of the Family" which conducts scholarly research supporting the family structure which is one of the Mormon Church's fundamental building blocks. Ambassador should likewise develop such "institutes." These institutes are not buildings, they do not require large expenditure in physical plant and equipment. Rather they will emphasize concepts and teachings of the church, be staffed by several competent faculty members already on salary plus a few graduate and undergraduate students. Each institute must have clear objectives, a sharp focus of direct relevance to the church, and be absolutely first rate in scholarship and methodology. This will take time, and much planning. Some possible examples: Institute of Moral Development (how character and values are formed in young people, Dr. George Geis); Institute of Biblical Counseling (how biblical concepts direct counseling techniques, Drs. Antion and Albert); Institute of Biblical Studies; Institute of Geopolitical Forecasting; Institute of the Relationship Between Science and Theology. As each institute would grow, it would publish a journal, yearly at first, perhaps growing to quarterly as it would become recognized throughout the world and quality papers would be received from colleagues with similar objectives.

Our publishing group in New York can expedite the marketing and financial efficiency of these journals, and co-operate in the preparation, production and distribution of quality books as well.

5) Pioneering the World Tomorrow

Though neglected in recent years, this idealistic vision of Ambassador College must be re-emphasized. The dual and complementary campuses of the college, one urban and one rural, give us great opportunity. Such idealistic thinking must never be naive or superstitious, but it can be rooted in the reality of our great commission.

It seems ludicrous that when people talk about the college, they talk about "secularization," the acquisition of additional physical plant, financial systems,

"separation" of church and college, even accreditation itself. These "issues" should be relegated to secondary levels of importance; they must be surely solved, but by making them more important than they are, they become harder, not easier to solve. Ambassador College must become the best resource for the church. When people talk about the college in the future they should be talking about the quality of research, excellence of teaching, the exciting scholarly papers, the powerful intellectual support for the church in dozens of areas. Once the latter vision becomes reality, the former issues will have been resolved.

In conclusion, the college must be taken out of the political arena (or off the operating table, depending on which analogy you like best). The college must cease to usurp your time, energy and creative vitality, all of which needs to be focused on media, publications, books and the overall growth of the church. (You should look forward to involving yourself in the college whenever you creatively desire or see the need.)

The college must also be made financially efficient by eliminating unnecessary duplication of administration and overhead by utilizing the systems of the church without in any way breaching accreditation standards. The college must reduce its percentage of the overall church budget. Consequently every college program must be evaluated in terms of its direct benefit to the Work of the church and to the church itself.

Future planning should include a realistic, appropriately optimistic view of re-opening Big Sandy in some capacity in the near term (e.g. Fall 1979) and a major shift of undergraduate education in the long term. With a properly growing possible church through media and publications as our first priority, we can look forward to the time when we might have the entire undergraduate education of the church, involving perhaps 2500 students, located on the Big Sandy campus; the Pasadena campus would then be the home of our several graduate schools and world-renown institutes and journals producing and disseminating quality and respected research supporting and expanding the teachings of the church.

Accreditation per se is not the real issue today. Rather we should seek to make the college a fundamental part of the Work throughout the 1980s, supplying the educational, intellectual and scholarly support for fulfilling the great commission of preaching Christ's Gospel to all the world.