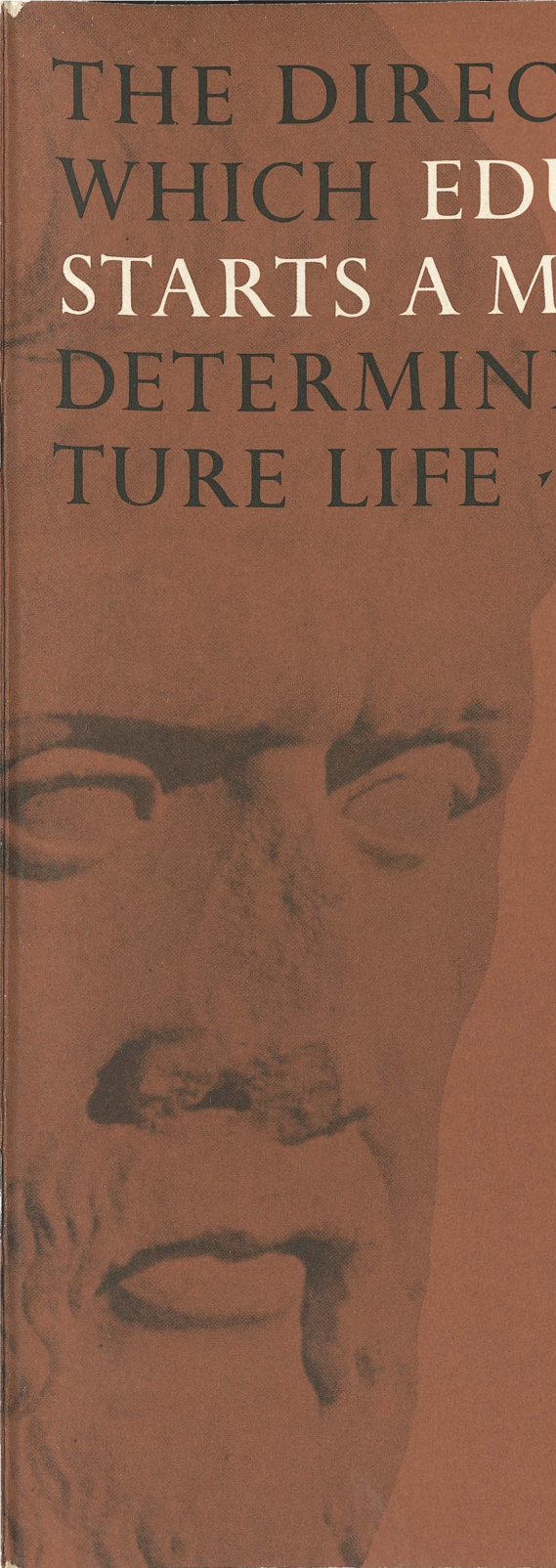
THE DIRECTION IN WHICH EDUCATION STARTS A MAN WILL DETERMINE HIS FUTURE LIFE . . . PLATO



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Portrait of Graduates

Eleven graduates discuss the St. John's program

BENEDICT

BISBERG

CAVE

COLLINGWOOD

GOLDWIN

JACOB

LINCOLN

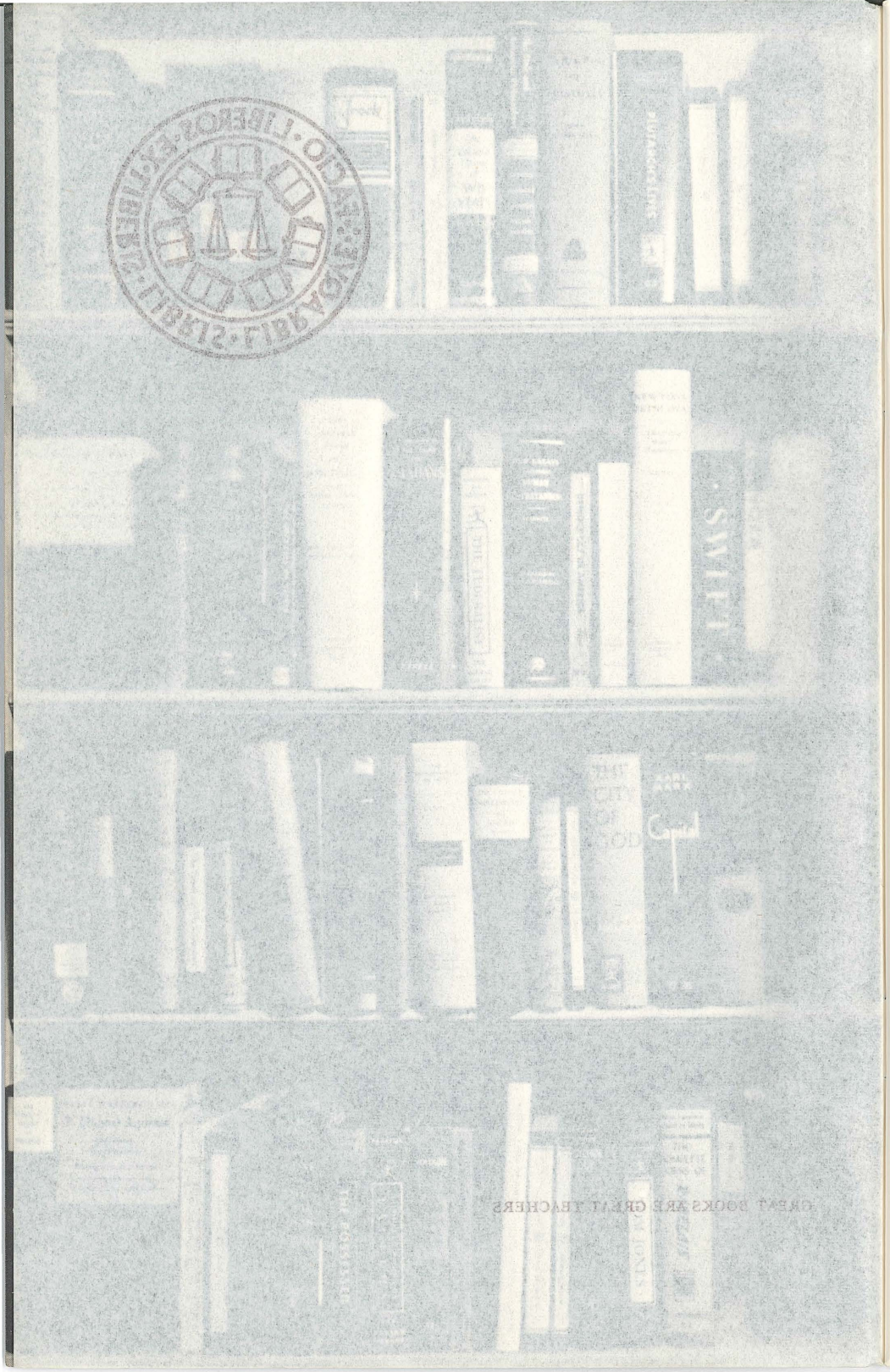
SIMPSON

VAN DOREN

WILLIAMS

JONES

GREAT BOOKS ARE GREAT TEACHERS



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STARTS A MAN'

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Contents

Foreword

The aim of an education in the liberal arts is to nurture the educable student in the art of being true to himself and true to fact; to help him discover what he *is* and not to be beguiled by what his fancy may mirror; to free his intellect and to arm him with the moral virtues he will need to withstand the vicissitudes of fortune.

The liberal arts college with a concern for the quality of the education it offers can take nothing for granted but such principles and practices as stand the tests of experience and reasonable argument. And since its inception, the St. John's Program has been under continuous examination and revision by the faculty and academic officers responsible for its achievement.

But be that as it may, no course of study can be judged by the curriculum alone; its value is enhanced or reduced by the quality of its product. "A college is not a factory; the mind of a human being is not an engine block; a curriculum is not an assembly line; a graduate is not *just* a product. A teacher is not an engineer working from a blueprint; he is an artist trying to embody a vision in the most intractable of materials." (The St. John's Program, *A Report,* 1955) With what degree of success do we meet? One important and interesting measure of our effectiveness, then, may be made by those informed critics, the graduates.

With the aid of men who have experienced the course of study, we take another close look at ourselves from their point of view. We have invited several alumni to sum up for us, reflecting in retrospect and in maturity, the impact of the St. John's Program upon them, for the most part ten or more years after graduation.

Peter Donchian, *Board of Visitors and Governors,* May 1962

Through direct contact with the great minds of Western civilization and through rigorous exercise in language, mathematics and the sciences, St. John's College seeks to develop free and rational men with an understanding of the basic unity of knowledge, an appreciation of our common cultural heritage, and a consciousness of social and moral obligations. St. John's considers that such men are best equipped to master the specific skills of any calling and to become mature, competent and responsible citizens of a free state.

John L. Williams '50

To Know One's Self

Ever since the golden age of Greece and no doubt long before, the oracle commands "Know Thyself". In a very real sense, there is nothing else to know but one's self and one's relationship with the surrounding phenomenal world. Education, it can be said, is nothing more than the process of continually increasing this understanding of one's self. Out of education, which all men experience more or less, finally develops the attitudes with which we accept human existence, the values by which we measure the good of human action, and the goals we deem worthy of attainment. If these values and goals are fundamental and fitting to the human condition, then this finite life can seem fruitful and worthwhile. If they prove to be ill-conceived and poorly understood, life is apt to be an accelerating disillusionment permeated with a sense of failure. It is axiomatic that the more thoroughly a man knows himself, the greater chance he has of being in charge of himself and at peace with the world.

An education that incorporates a solid grasp of the disciplines of the traditional liberal arts together with a close *(continued overleaf)*

Mr. Williams is a senior partner in a real estate company of Sacramento, California, whose principal business is the purchase, sale, and development of investment real estate. He is active in the affairs of organized real estate, serving as the elected president of the Sacramento Real Estate Board in 1956 and the elected regional vice president of the California Real Estate Board in 1956 and the elected regional vice president of the California Real Estate Association in 1957. Currently he is serving a third term on the real estate advisory committee to Clark Kerr, President of the University of California.

and careful study of the works of the most penetrating and influential thinkers of all time is certainly an effective way of getting to know one's self.

A sincere and conscientious effort to master the material offered at St. John's at the least brings about certain habits of mind and an objectivity regarding one's self that prove invaluable in making the continual judgments human affairs demand. For instance, one can't read the prime movers of the western tradition without being permanently infected with an unquenchable desire for truth, a thorough respect for excellence, and an impatience with anything but genuine worth. Just a small acquaintance with philosophy produces an everlasting humility that takes the monkey, ego, off one's back. If philosophy doesn't totally succeed in this, the study of science, Darwin, and Freud does. Integrity in all one's affairs begins when one learns to be true to himself. Lasting literature makes this point again and again, until it finally looms large for all to see, never to be forgotten. Without integrity there can be no victory and no real accomplishment. After four years of the St. John's Program one realizes that freedom is an elusive and complicated concept, and perhaps in a metaphysical sense, non-existent to man. But if it can be realized by man at all, it comes only to the man of understanding. Knowledge of one's self can't help but bring a measure of charity for others and the Bible, read and discussed in seminars for weeks at St. John's, sobers one with the thought that men are wise in proportion to their charity. What more practical accomplishment is there than the ability to engage in reasoned discourse, clearly discerning the point and articulately pursuing it. Through the language tutorial and the always provocative seminars at St. John's this potential talent becomes realized.

For me St. John's was a total success. I am grateful for the good fortune that brought me there.

John Van Doren '47

Intellectual Journey

I do not know that I have anything worthwhile to contribute to this discussion. But as I am asked to say something, I would speak a little of the end of education and the means because it seems to me we get the two things mixed up a good deal of the time, which accounts for much of our trouble in trying to educate ourselves.

The concern of education is, or ought to be, with the critical faculty—with judgment. That is the end of the process, in which knowledge is the means. It is an indispensable means, certainly, without which nothing else is possible. Still, judgment is what we are trying to train—the capacity, as I may call it, of seeing things and knowing what they are. The student whose critical faculty is competent to do this is by so much educated. It is not that he is complete, or that he has in the ordinary way achieved something. Rather does he possess an art, in the practice of which he can be relied on to teach himself. At that point education in the formal sense can do nothing further for him, and he is sent armed into the world to meet the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. It is sad that so much of the work of the universities is designed more to discourage this art than to develop it. No doubt the exceptional student does it anyway,

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Dr. Van Doren completed his graduate work in American history at Columbia University in 1953. After an interval of two years in the Army, he was appointed to the faculty of Brandeis University in 1956, where he has been ever since. He has not remained in the History Department, but has somehow moved to the Department of English, which is not surprising for the son of Mark Van Doren. He is presently at work on a book on the Jackson period.

and we regard him with the awe, or perhaps the jealousy, that genius always inspires. But the run of students is not born with such ability; the unhappy fact is that it rarely does learn, that this ability is not as a matter of course ours. Far too often the student is suppressed in his mind by the authorities, whose insights when borrowed are supposed to make one authoritative. Of course education does not happen so. The student who thinks it does is still in the cave watching shadows. He has not yet begun the painful climb into his own intelligence. Nor does he even know—he is often not encouraged to know—that the effort must be made.

To make it ought nevertheless to be his aim, and the school that does not help him is no school. It is an arduous and lonely business, as anyone knows. One is apt to stumble many times along the way —to rest content in the belief that ideas can seem to be enough, and more than one degree has been gained by footnotes. Even if the student survives this temptation, he is likely to please his teacher long before he pleases himself. The brilliance of the sun is strong stuff, certain to suggest a safe retreat into the half-light of scholarship. Yet the mind interested in its own success will stay the course, justifying both itself and those who sent it forth. Perhaps this was, after all, the distinction of St. John's that it understood the importance of such an intellectual journey, which it inspired us to make in the best way we could. I have taught elsewhere long enough to know that the understanding is anything but universal. The College as I remember it never made the mistake of asking us to substitute other minds for our own. Neither was it afraid of our bad judgment, which had naturally to *be* bad before it could be anything else. A combination of wisdom and courage was required of an institution, it seems to me, to persist in such practices, which ran counter to the education of the time. True, some of the College's graduates have become apostate, feeling dubious of the way they were taught. But some did not doubt. It is because I count myself one of these that I am not sorry for this chance to confess it. And so at any rate I do.

Thomas K. Simpson '50

Concept of Culture

It is not easy for me even now to evaluate my decision to come to St. John's as an undergraduate. There were mixed in it many elements: a desire for a sounder understanding of the foundations of science itself; a disgust and despair in the human implications of the technical society I thought I saw emerging from the war; curiosity as to what lay on the other side of a good many intellectual fences.

For me St. John's was a revolutionary intellectual experience. I began to feel that the peculiar academic mix which constituted my background suited me particularly well to work at the problem of liberal education in an era in which the mind of man was operating best and most productively in the sciences. I wanted to dispel in practice the notion that sciences require a different type of mind, less of subtlety, finesse, or of a gift for metaphor, and to help students to make a start toward a reintegration of their culture.

Science is a most serious problem for us all, as men. Not merely does it—in all professional innocence—engulf us with by-products which are getting out of control, but it is deeply unintelligible to

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During the war, which interrupted his work in electrical engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Mr. Simpson worked in military electronics. Sensing that he was getting a kind of generalized technical education rather than the study of science he had envisioned, he came to St. John's as a *freshman* and graduated in 1950. After some years of teaching experience at Wesleyan University and the American University at Cairo, Egypt, he was appointed as a tutor at St. John's in 1956. A Danforth Foundation grant has, he says, left him with vastly increased respect for physics and the physicist.

us. Those among us who best understand most things, least understand science, while the few who are scientists either founder in the complexity of their own competences, or emerge to argue that science is not something understandable, but only an efficient method of organizing matters. The result is that we have lost contact with the concept of *culture*—that is, with any whole view of what we as men know at the present time.

We have taken the easy way out in acting as if we were two kinds of men with two kinds of minds, the humanistic and the scientific, or those who think sensitively and those who measure and calculate. In my opinion, this is not so. On one hand, the motion of mind in science is often subtle beyond any man's following. A fault of science is that it develops too fast to permit time to follow its own thoughts more than half-way to their implications. Science works constantly, and dexterously, with metaphor and the inspired image. On the other hand, there is no real literary or philosophical island of retreat from science in our time. If one would take into view what-is, he must engage in thought with the scientists.

At St. John's some of us are haltingly but earnestly working at resolving that dichotomy, with the realization that the task may indeed prove impossible. It is not that the scientist knows his science, but cannot communicate it, while the liberal artist knows his arts, but cannot get the scientist to stop to listen. Rather the scientist will not know his science until he has learned to explain it in terms other men can understand; nor have the liberal arts any real integrity so long as they fail to comprehend the sciences. 'The sciences *are* liberal arts.' Our problem is to find out what that hypothesis implies.

To me, it is of course important to consider St. John's in both its aspects—as a school in which students are reading the books for the first time, and as a community of learning in a broader sense in which the faculty are expressly concerned with the common relevance of their individual studies. In this sense the Program is a career, I think not a bad one.

C. Ranlet Lincoln '50

The Courage to Teach

I cannot claim to have gained from St. John's any vocational goals, any purposeful course to follow in my career. But I think that I can attribute to my college education the basis of a kind of intellectual flexibility and breadth which have served me well. Some of the changes in my fields of work have been sudden and unplanned. Had my educational experience been less broad, more narrowly vocational, I would not have been able to make the kinds of shifts that I have, and might well have found myself at the end of a blind alley. One other point about the relevance of the St. John's program to my working life: in all the kinds of work I have done, there has always been one similarity, namely the need for an ability to perceive, understand, and communicate to others relationships between things and ideas which are not immediately apparent. Since this exercise is one of the chief activities of a student at St. John's, the point needs no elaboration.

In the ten years since I left St. John's I have come more and more

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"Activities other than vocational which may have some connection with my time at St. John's include dabbling in politics, in a very amateur but most rewarding manner, a lively interest in secondary education culminating in election to my local public school board (perhaps my children also had something to do with that), and a still growing concern with Christian theology (I was converted to Christianity from a kind of cheerful heathenism during my sophomore year by Winfree Smith, Simon Kaplan, and St. Augustine)."

Mr. Lincoln directs the development program of the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis.

to feel that the program is not only soundly conceived in its philosophy of education, but quite remarkably good in its practice thereof. St. John's would be a great college if for no other reason than that it, along with a handful of other colleges, is informed and guided by a quality of seriousness and responsibility toward the educational task which is not even understood, let alone shared, by the educational establishment in general. This statement is, in my judgment, more true today than it was in 1950, not despite, but *because* of the currently fashionable preoccupation with what is usually referred to as excellence in education. This current emphasis itself has piled new confusions, new pressures, new fads, and new demands upon an educational structure already so chaotic and corrupt that we find it welcoming the present problems mainly as a means of turning away from the ones it already had. Now, more than then, St. John's is truly a beacon in the darkness, and for all its faults it has a duty to shine as steadily as it can.

No college and no teacher can really "teach" anybody anything. The act of learning is solitary, individual, personal. Each of us must learn what we learn for ourselves. The function of the teacher, and the college, therefore, consists of two very important things: one is to make knowledge available to the student, the other is to create and sustain an environment which encourages the student to want to learn. This understanding of teaching and learning lies at the heart of St. John's character as a community of learning. It is a contagious excitement with the very stuff of life, a passionate involvement in understanding, an act of love which evokes an active response in the student.

But as important as the teacher's love of knowledge and understanding is his love of the learner. Precisely because learning is an individual and personal act, each student is valued as unique and personal. And also because learning is hard, and understanding is not gotten cheaply, and because the learner falters and stumbles, the loving support of the community of scholars is the essential environment in which learning can take place. It is to the glory of St. John's that in the full knowledge of this outrageous demand, it has the courage to teach.

Bernard E. Jacob '54

The Art of Being Honest

The phrase, virtue is its own reward, in the mouth of the philosopher is a definition, not an exhortation: that which, in fact, may be enjoyed for its own sake constitutes a kind of human virtue, transcending the categories of praise and blame which, I would guess, delimit the socially useful virtues. The men and the books which taught at St. John's had a passion for that sort of virtue: that passion was catching, and I hope that I was thoroughly infected. To understand, to do well, to be righteous, to be admirable and admired: one hopes that these phrases are only catechismetical expressions of a single core of meaning, or its facets, rather unconvincingly held in the excruciating tension of experienced life. That, in a loose way of talking, is, I take it, the hope and boundary of the traditions of our nearest ancestors. It is the tradition which, in its way, St. John's undertakes to transmit to its young heathen. As long as it does so, it has my admiration.

Mr. Jacob is credited with two years' postgraduate work in the Institute of Philosophical Research on Santayana, Bradley, Hobhouse, Suarez, and Burke, while simultaneously enrolled in the Law School of the University of California at Berkeley. He became Article Editor of the California Law Review and received the signal honor of a one year appointment as clerk to William O. Douglas, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. With the conclusion of that rare experience with Justice Douglas, he accepted an offer from one of the top law firms of Los Angeles. "In listing any medals I've won, I am especially proud of the invitation to lecture at St. John's in 1959 on *The Roots of Freedom.*"

It's perhaps a little silly to formulate my reflections on the value of the St. John's Program in such high-flown and incredible language, but the unfortunate truth is that, once that language must be abandoned for more modest description, the impact of the Program is lost. It is an extremely difficult *art* to be honest: that art is the end of all the civilized skills which St. John's attempts to allude to: that art includes the realization that just such attic-remnants language *is* the language which applies. It seems to me, then, that *at* St. John's I was introduced to the *art* of being honest, that I was persuaded that it was somehow worth the effort to acquire the art, and that the exercise of that art was (all other passions and pleasures, hopes and fears aside) the pleasure least entangled with time, least tinged with crime, and—I return to my first paragraph—untrammeled by cost and aim.

It is in relation to that art that the authors were most meaningful to me: Plato, for instance, because he taught me that it's impossible to learn (and thus made the fact that one learns all the time interesting), that talk is the proof of truth's existence, that the much maligned science of metaphysics is only rigorous supposition, and that a possible divinity touches the hope that supposition will one day blend into truth; Aristotle, for instance, because he taught me that all science is but an exercise in looking, or smelling, or hearing.

But St. John's also meant to me the people I met there: the tutors, the students. This aspect of St. John's is inextricably mixed with its books, and its Buchananish ideology of reforming American learning. I learned there that one can want to learn, without vanity, or gruesome passions, or sinister aims – others might already have known this. St. John's thus played for me individually a role which, for others, may be played by some friend, by upbringing, or family tradition, or the early exercise of a superior intelligence; I was civilized there.

Robert A. Goldwin '50

So Much So Quickly

A biographical sketch makes clear that my whole life has developed out of the education I received at St. John's. Every job I have held has demanded exactly the kind of training, exactly the skills that are uniquely the product of the St. John's curriculum. I have a reputation as a discussion leader, a professional, and have written a now widely used manual on the subject: but all I have learned about discussion I learned in St. John's seminars. This work demands a special kind of critical reading for the editing and selection of materials used in discussion groups; all I have done in such work is to continue the kind of reading I learned to do at St. John's. In short, St. John's has given me what it has never claimed, a professional living.

But it has given me more than a living; in a sense, it has given me my life. I cannot imagine what my life would have been if I had had the bad luck not to have gone to St. John's. I do not mean by

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Mr. Goldwin is Lecturer in Political Science and Director of the Public Affairs Conference Center, University of Chicago. The Center's conferences are discussion meetings on urgent national problems, attended by national leaders in public and academic life, and conducted by Mr. Goldwin much as are the St. John's seminars. He is also the editor of several volumes of readings on political subjects and co-editor (with Charles A. Nelson '45) of *Toward the Liberally Educated Executive* (1957).

"Through all this, I am slowly putting together a doctoral dissertation and may very well finish it in 1962. The oldest of my four children will be starting at St. John's in 1963; it seems only right that her father's student days end before hers begin."

this simply the fact of education. I have had now enough experience of other educational institutions and have met enough of their graduates to feel confident that the St. John's Program is unique. I have colleagues as well educated as I, no doubt, but I think—and they will agree—that they obtained by chance what I was given by design. They learned to a large degree in spite of the curriculum; I because of it. I doubt that I could have done so well as they: that is, I doubt that I would have ever discovered the way to a true education on my own without the guidance of St. John's. If I have any regret, it is that I have not taken greater advantage of it.

Although it may seem that I am unable to speak critically of St. John's, perhaps I may add that as a senior I felt a desperate necessity to learn something—anything—*thoroughly*. In four years we had covered so much so quickly that I longed to pause and linger over something, to dwell on it; above all, to master it. St. John's knows that it does not provide concentrated study; that is left intentionally, for those who want it, to the graduate schools. But when I neared the end of the fourth year, I think almost nothing could have kept me from at least one year of graduate school. I felt driven to specialize, to narrow my concentration. Whether this is intentional or not, in my case it was beneficial. My first year as a graduate student was the most intense and intensive year of study of my career—and, as a consequence, the most profitable. St. John's had given me both the motive force for specialization and the larger framework within which to place it. I feel a tremendous gratitude to St. John's College, to the place itself, to the idea which governs it, and to the men who give it its expression. They have given me much that I consider most valuable in life, and have enriched whatever I have acquired elsewhere.

The Learning Process

I cannot claim that I was much of a scholar at St. John's, but I had been exposed to every major theological concept within the western tradition. One cannot, however casually, read Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, the Holy Scriptures, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, Calvin, Luther, Kierkegaard, to name a few, without absorbing something of the basic problems of theology.

The great value which I found in the St. John's Program was the foundation it laid for future and continuing study. In the years following seminary, I have had occasion to study at several colleges and universities. I gain the distinct impression that few institutions provide the broad, basic preparation offered by St. John's.

This leads me to what is perhaps the most striking insight into the St. John's Program: It cares more about the student learning than the teacher teaching. It was only after a couple of years of graduate

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The Reverend Mr. Collingwood, Dean of the Northwest Convocation of Kansas and now carrying a host of other responsibilities, was ordained by the Bishop of Washington and was advanced to the Priesthood in December of 1953. In 1955 he became Rector of the Church of the Convenant, Junction City, Kansas, one of the oldest parishes in the Kansas territory. In November 1961 he assumed his present duties as Rector of St. Paul's in Kansas City.

Fr. Collingwood prefaced his statement:

"I wonder if you do not have me confused with my better-known brother. I am Harris, not Charles Collingwood, and the bottom man in my class, not a Rhodes Scholar as was Charles. However I willingly send the material you request."

study that it dawned upon me that my St. John's tutors had a curious habit of listening more than they spoke. Lectures, by and large, took place on Friday nights, and the real teaching took place in tutorials and seminars where tutors taught by listening. Indeed, on occasion the best tutor may be the silent one who speaks only when the student begins to ask questions that matter to him. There are few things less effective than the answer to a question that has never been asked. A student must learn, can only learn, for himself. The teacher's function is to listen, and having heard, to aid in the learning process of the individual. It seems to me, and I speak as a preacher, that you can never *tell* anybody anything. I wonder, somewhat sadly, if St. John's is not unique in that it cares more for the student than it does for the brilliance of the professor.

As I look back over my years at St. John's two or three features emerge which seem essential parts of the St. John's Program: First, the excitement of the learning process; second, the sense of community; and third, the concern for the student. When I speak of excitement I do not mean a bubbly enthusiasm but rather excitement in terms of intensity and involvement. At times it bordered upon the ridiculous, but I can remember learning about Platonic Forms by being vitally concerned about them. It had to do not only with my mind, but with my life. It wasn't simply an idea in a course in philosophy, but related directly to a wide range of concepts and questions: Is there a necessary relation between Euclid's figures and the world we see? And what is language? And what of courage? And how does learning take place? And what is justice? And how do you measure? And what is really *real?* This kind of intensity and excitement cannot be borne alone, but must be lived in a community that is sharing a great deal in common. The idea of a college as a community of learning was more than a phrase—it was a necessity. The conversations demanded by this kind of learning could only take place among others equally as involved. Within such a community it was often, and happily, difficult to determine who was teaching whom.

Ray C. Cave '48

The 101st Great Book

Trying to analyze what St. John's did for me or made of me is a dismally complicated business. Perhaps the single most important thing it did was to make me a questioner. The Great Books arouse the inquisitive spirit, and once roused this spirit lasts a lifetime.

Any man with the questioning attitude has a major advantage in our society, for the handmaiden of curiosity is doubt and rarely has civilization been in greater need of circumspect doubters. Constantly beset by pomposity and fraud, it is necessary to be armed with skepticism to survive as an individual.

And skepticism too is a by-product of the St. John's Program; in fact, there is no escaping it. Thus, when you have examined the principal works of all religions, you are likely to accept none at face value. When you see a Ptolemy change from the pronouncer of astronomical certainty in one age to the perpetrator of history's most astronomical error in the next, or watch Euclid's parallel lines do

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Mr. Cave's military-minded father decided that the St. John's liberal arts program would be the right preliminary for his son prior to West Point. Duly entered at a bewildered fifteen, he was allowed an unusual fifth year of grace to complete the four year course.

He has been a school teacher, a police reporter, general assignment reporter, rewrite man and assistant city editor – all for the *Baltimore Evening Sun.* [Sandwiched in that progression as a newsman is a tour of duty as a Counter-Intelligence Corps agent.] He is now an associate editor of *Sports Illustrated* magazine.

Mr. Cave adds a postscript: "Wish you well with your booklet. All you have to do is just keep us honest."

one thing and Lobachevski's another, then you begin to recognize the elusiveness of fact and the need for unending curiosity and doubt.

Study of the liberal arts in the St. John's fashion can develop in its graduate a large and liberal spirit. It is of the first importance that a college graduate be able to bring both a searching and a sympathetic viewpoint to the world around him. Both these elements are needed, for to search without sympathy is to get information without understanding, and to be sympathetic without searching could be to be maudlin instead of concerned. It has been my good fortune as a journalist to talk to many kinds of people, often at crucial and revealing moments in their lives. A liberal outlook toward humanity which permits tolerance in an era of intolerance and an unfettered and inquisitive mind are satisfying gifts for which I am most grateful.

The years erode away the precise recollection of the Great Books. I may have forgotten Kant, Newton's theorems may no longer be comprehensible, and Greek a foreign language. Perhaps at this distance I can assess with some validity what St. John's offers. It enables its students to view the world with that exciting reaction, wonder. It can make life wonder-full. You learn that at St. John's there are not just 100 Great Books, but 101. So you leave school and the 100 books behind you and you search and seek forever for the 101st. No such hunter can remain a shallow man.

Finally, I see no great mysticism in the St. John's education. I am a simple man and I came away with some simple values. If Socrates is right, I had them somewhere with me when I came to St. John's as a freshman; if Hegel is right, it doesn't matter where they originated as long as they are true in and of themselves. At least, St. John's brought them out for me to see and to have and to hold.

How many colleges can be sure they have done as much?

Aaron Bisberg '49

Not Terminal

In these later years one word has become quite important to me—a word, as I recall, that did not attract much attention at St. John's. However, since sounds are so often the condition of the hearer it is very possible that I, as hearer, did not give my attention to the word.

The word? Professionalism.

Fulfillment, it seems to me, is what man seeks. As I stand here now surveying what I believe, I conceive two qualities as necessary for this fulfillment. One is professionalism: that body of knowledge and experience which, constantly used, are the tools of a profession through which a man finds daily expression and excitement. It is our nature to profess but anyone who professes can do so with validity and satisfaction, it seems to me, only when he has at his command the knowledge and experience which, when applied, proves itself by accomplishment for the desired end.

Professionalism is a narrow kind of thing. It restricts a man to

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Mr. Bisberg spent a year at Boston University, a year at the New School for Social Research, followed by three and a half years in the U. S. Air Force, serving in the Pacific. Graduating in 1949, he started and operated for eight years a farming and food packaging business. In 1959 he decided to change his field entirely to embark on his present occupation as a Visual Communication specialist. He is engaged in the training of teachers, administrators, and executives in special phases of visual communication.

His statement arrived with this postscript: "I don't know when I have tried anything more difficult to end more unsatisfied. This assignment calls for a poet and a poem."

the confines of the profession but in its confinement it demands discipline and perseverance. In the final analysis it demands dedication, and dedication is very much a part of the sweetness of life.

That other quality so necessary for fulfillment is the ability to incorporate one's profession into a scheme of things which make this a better world to live in. I cannot prove that this should be a better world to live in nor that it ever will be. But I believe it can only be and that it should be only through the efforts of professionals who recognize their profession as an integral part of the family of man.

I believe a man must attain competence in a particular endeavor if he is to attain wisdom, for to me wisdom is the blissful marriage of competence with a dedication, directed by a catholic perspective.

As I look back to those days at St. John's—days I would not wish to replace—I can remember how many of us were indecisive at the end of our four years. I believe it was because we recognized the need to do, but we were not aware of the need for professionalism. It was as if we were anxious to join the Peace Corps, but we did not know how to operate a transit.

This does not mean to me that St. John's is wrong; it does mean that St. John's is not terminal. The chasm between undergraduate education and professional training must still be bridged if we are to be doers. The Great Books offer us the opportunity to stand off and view the panoramic scheme of things. With the necessary further special study of a profession's tools and rules we are not only observers but shapers. What one learns at St. John's from the teachings of the Great Books needs that confined, disciplined application which one man in his time is capable of, and through which, as through a lens, what we have learned comes into focus, as the distant star through a telescope.

Stephen Benedict '47

The Lesson Lingers

The College didn't *solve* a thing for me. It took me apart at the joints, and I've been trying ever since to put the pieces back together. In other words, the College made perfectly certain that I would not be 'well adjusted'. And now, looking back, I am thankful for that.

Of course there *are* things for which I blame St. John's. I wish it had been tougher, better organized, less Utopian about what it expected of us. I wish there had been more history and economics and more than a scoffing reference to psychology and the social sciences. The College, too, had its dogmas and fetishes from which we all suffered. Then there was the endless struggle for recognition by the fine arts, those elusive critics of philosophy whom the philosophers so misunderstood and resented.

I could go on *ad infinitum* to blame the College for all I think wrong with me, but more to the point here and always is what stuck. If, as one aphorism goes, education is what is left after you've forgotten everything you knew, then what did St. John's leave with

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Mr. Benedict writes:
"In mid-1959, I decided to leave six years of government service to join the staff of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund in New York. There I have been for two and a half years, learning the craft of philanthropy, with the exception of three months' leave in the summer of 1960 when, at the Brookings Institution in Washington, I helped put together a series of papers aimed hopefully at helping the two presidential candidates prepare for the problems one of them would have to face during the period of transition from the old to the new Administration."

me fifteen years after—surely enough time in which to forget a good deal. Here are at least a few things.

First of all, the Big Ideas, debased and corrupted on every side, still mean something—love and death, peace and justice, courage and freedom, for instance. Thanks to the College, I know something of the load they have borne. After all, we rolled around these boulders for four years and could scarcely again be ignorant of their weight.

Looking back in another way, I praise the College most of all for its integrity, for the resolution to be what it is with all the odds against it. I praise it for what frequently seemed its exaggerated devotion to reason, its inordinate exaltation of intelligence in a notably ignorant world.

In all honesty I can say that in fifteen years I have never long been bored or lonely. Am I wrong to credit those four churning years in Annapolis for at least a good share of this? I don't think so. I need only observe the *ennui* of friends and acquaintances on all sides whose minds seem never to have started breathing. In sum, I think the College did for me the most that anyone should expect in four short years; it set up that indispensable tension between the real and the ideal without which no true learning ever takes place. It has given me different ambitions from most of my contemporaries, the visions of philosophy and poetry seem more and more relevant—hardly the current success symbols. There is scarcely a person, an idea, or an institution that I can certify at face value. Certainty in any form repels me. In other words, the College has left me skeptical and critical, but not, I think, cynical or beat. I am alive and curious and dissenting.

The air at St. John's was full of doctrines, but the College, it seems to me, had only one: use your brains, think until it hurts. I hereby attest the lesson lingers, and I am grateful. Perhaps one day I shall learn it.

David Jones '59

Sui Generis

It is difficult to evaluate the St. John's Program in contrast with other sorts of college programs. The Program was originally intended to rectify some of the shortcomings of more conventional American education; but it does not so much rectify shortcomings as offer an alternative. That it is an alternative, and not a super-education is something that relatively few students understand fully. They may understand, for example, that the non-elective nature of the Program is intended to be to their benefit. But they do not always see that not to make a choice is to make a very serious choice.

As a nascent philosopher, I have inevitably come to realize that St. John's is not a training in philosophy. Like mathematics, language, history, and science, philosophy is just another of the things men do; neither capstone nor keystone. (One famous philosopher has defined it as a "highly proprietary brand of haggling" which I

Mr. Jones (a *recent* graduate, Ed.) writes:
"Since my graduation from St. John's I have continued, for the most part, with post-graduate education—amalgamated with some traveling. I'm currently completing a Master's thesis in ethical philosophy, under a research grant from the University of Melbourne; and shall return to the U. S., with my wife and (Australian) son to commence on a Ph.D. This is *via* a half-year's teaching in the St. John's laboratory program (January-June 1960), and a sojourn in South Africa. These travelings have, I hope, a certain Odyssean point of their own, together with their academic purpose. One may find something out in Capetown and Johannesburg; but only at first hand; and not, of course, the expected."

believe to be profoundly correct.) As such it is not approached professionally by the St. John's Program: it is neither the aim, nor the point. If I may make a somewhat backhanded suggestion, then, one of the greatest values of the Program is that it obscures this fact for so long a time as four years, and in such close proximity to philosophy. It makes no real difference whether one goes on with philosophy. It is not, of course, in fact an intrinsically lustrous subject matter; nor are there any such. But, it might be argued, if one pursues swampfires long and hard enough, before finding out they are just swampfires (or alternately, just giving up: graduating), it leaves over a certain luster in the eye of the beholder.

I think the only major difficulty within the Program is its failure to provide–*insist* on–specialized training. I realize that training can involve vices that the Program was specifically designed to counteract; and I appreciate the validity of the reasoning here. But that the argument is valid does not in this case dissolve the problem. Nor do I mean to suggest any solution; the practical difficulties may be insurmountable. I only insist that there is no question of justifying the Program's lack of specialization; for that cannot be done. The experiment may be over, but the Program has not achieved an altogether satisfactory form. Its principles are vindicated; it is now proper to discard a few of them.

I do not, of course, mean to pan our panorama. One point, by way of testimonial, should be made as clearly as possible–that the St. John's Program is a most astonishingly sophisticated piece of work; both on paper, and in practice. It is so far superior to various other "liberal arts" programs (or those I've run across) as to be *sui generis*.

Occupational Survey of Graduates, 1941-1961

AGRICULTURE	3
ARCHITECTURE	3
ARMED FORCES	9(2%)
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY:	
Insurance	5
Labor Unions	3
Non-managerial positions	35
Ownerships and Managerial positions	24
Public Relations	2
Real Estate	2
Research	15
Salesmen	12
Total	98(23%)
EDUCATION:	
Administration	5
Research	4
Teaching	
Elementary	17
Secondary	36
College	34
	87(20%)
Graduate Study	55(13%)
Independent Study	2
Total	153(36%)
ENGINEERING	7
FINE ARTS:	
Artist	1
Musicians	5
Total	6
GOVERNMENT:	
Foreign Service	2
Local government	4
Mathematicians	6
Scientists	3
Other fields	15
Total	30(7%)
HOMEMAKING	8
LAW	24(5.5%)
LIBRARIES:	
Librarians	7
MEDICINE:	
Dentist	1
Nurse	1
Physicians	6
Psychologists	3
Specialists	3
Total	14(3%)
MINISTRY	11(2.6%)
PRESS	2
SCIENCE:	
Geologists	2
Meteorologists	2
Total	4
SOCIAL WORK	11(2.6%)
STATISTICS	1
THEATER AND TELEVISION:	
Actors	3
Designer	1
Director	1
Producers	3
Total	8(2%)
WRITING	15(3.5%)
DECEASED	3
UNKNOWN	14
Total	430

The St. John's Program: Its Scope

All a school can do—and St. John's is no exception—is to establish the conditions under which learning may take place. The curriculum provides a wide basis for the exercise of the skills of discussion, translation, demonstration and experimentation which in turn help the learning mind to experience the discipline of the liberal arts and to acquire an understanding of them. The various divisions of the program, especially the Seminar and the Formal Lecture, offer the student a good opportunity to enlarge his horizon, to consider aspects of things not yet considered, to meet with views of the world not encountered before, to discover the familiar in the new and the questionable in the familiar.

The College knows well how to spur questioning and inquiry. It has created an intellectual climate that permits the student to face problems, not in the attitude of passive spectatorship, viewing a series of systems of thought or imagination, the "idols of the Theater" in Bacon's phrase, but rather directly and actively, in the attitude of perplexed curiosity, wrestling with difficulties which have become his own. It is not a panorama of opinions, or styles, or disciplines, or systems; it is the sharp edge of a crucial question, the stumbling block of a massive contradiction, the labyrinth of complexities in a given problem, that furnishes link after link to the chain of learning offered to the student at St. John's. The essential factors that make this climate possible are the community of the learning effort, the continuity of the learning process, and the spontaneity of the learning itself.

The Faculty is aware that the College often falls short of this ideal learning situation toward which it strives. The curriculum is under constant scrutiny, study, and revision to achieve better means toward the ever valid ends of liberal education. Perhaps the College's greatest strength lies in its realization of the enormity of the task of teaching and learning which it has set for itself and for its students.

Jacob Klein *(Dean of the College 1949-1958)* May 1957

The St. John's Program: Looking Ahead

It is appropriate in the twenty-fifth year of the St. John's Program, to evaluate its failures and its successes: the Program has had its share of each.

The Program is not a static thing; it is changing and will change. It is proper to admit that it will change partly in unplanned ways, just because the world is essentially process, because there is forgetting and remembering, because the passage of time takes from us those to whom we owe incalculable debts. Let us recognize that the operation of the Program is not an automatic affair, which could proceed independently of the personal efforts and struggles and achieved insights of those who teach and those who learn.

The Faculty is now in the process of instituting planned changes in the upper two years, designed to lead the student beyond his initial state of shock or enthusiasm, experienced as he encounters the classical authors, into a more profound assumption of responsibility for his own education as he, a modern, confronts the problems and the crisis of modern thought. We envisage as necessary, in the implementation of such changes, some measure of release from the patterned routine of the earlier years, a greater degree of individualization of the work, more opportunity to pursue intensively and under guidance a particular line of inquiry.

The essential unity of aim need not, and indeed must not, be lost. From the beginning—and as firmly now as ever—the intention has been to provide a kind of precinct in which the disciplined practice of the liberal or intellectual arts could go on without unnecessary distraction; where the confrontation with the first-rate works of our tradition would be the central means, and the pursuit of wholeness of understanding would be the avowed and single-minded aim.

Curtis Wilson *(Dean of the College 1958-1962)* April 1962

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Admissions: The purpose of the admissions procedure is to determine whether an applicant has the necessary preparation and ability to do satisfactorily the work of the entire College program. Academic achievement and promise are of first importance, but the Admissions Committee also takes into account all available evidence of maturity, stability, self-discipline, and desire to do intellectual work.

Ordinarily it is expected that the candidate will have followed a college preparatory course and will have taken one and half years of algebra, one year of geometry, and two years of a foreign language; additional work in mathematics and language study is advised, as well as two or three years of natural sciences. In addition, every applicant must take the Scholastic Aptitude Test of the College Entrance Examination Board; must present letters of reference, including one from an officer or teacher in the school last attended; and must be recommended by his school for study at St. John's. In exceptional cases certain of these requirements may be waived.

Campus Visits: A student considering enrolling at St. John's should make every effort to visit the College. He may have a room in a dormitory and take his meals in the College dining hall without charge. He may attend tutorials, seminars, laboratories, and all other activities of the College, curricular and extracurricular. During the visit he will be interviewed by a member of the Admissions Committee. Since the seminar, which is the core of the Program, meets on Monday and Thursday evenings, one of these evenings should be included in the visit.

Women Undergraduates: Since 1951, St. John's College has been coeducational.

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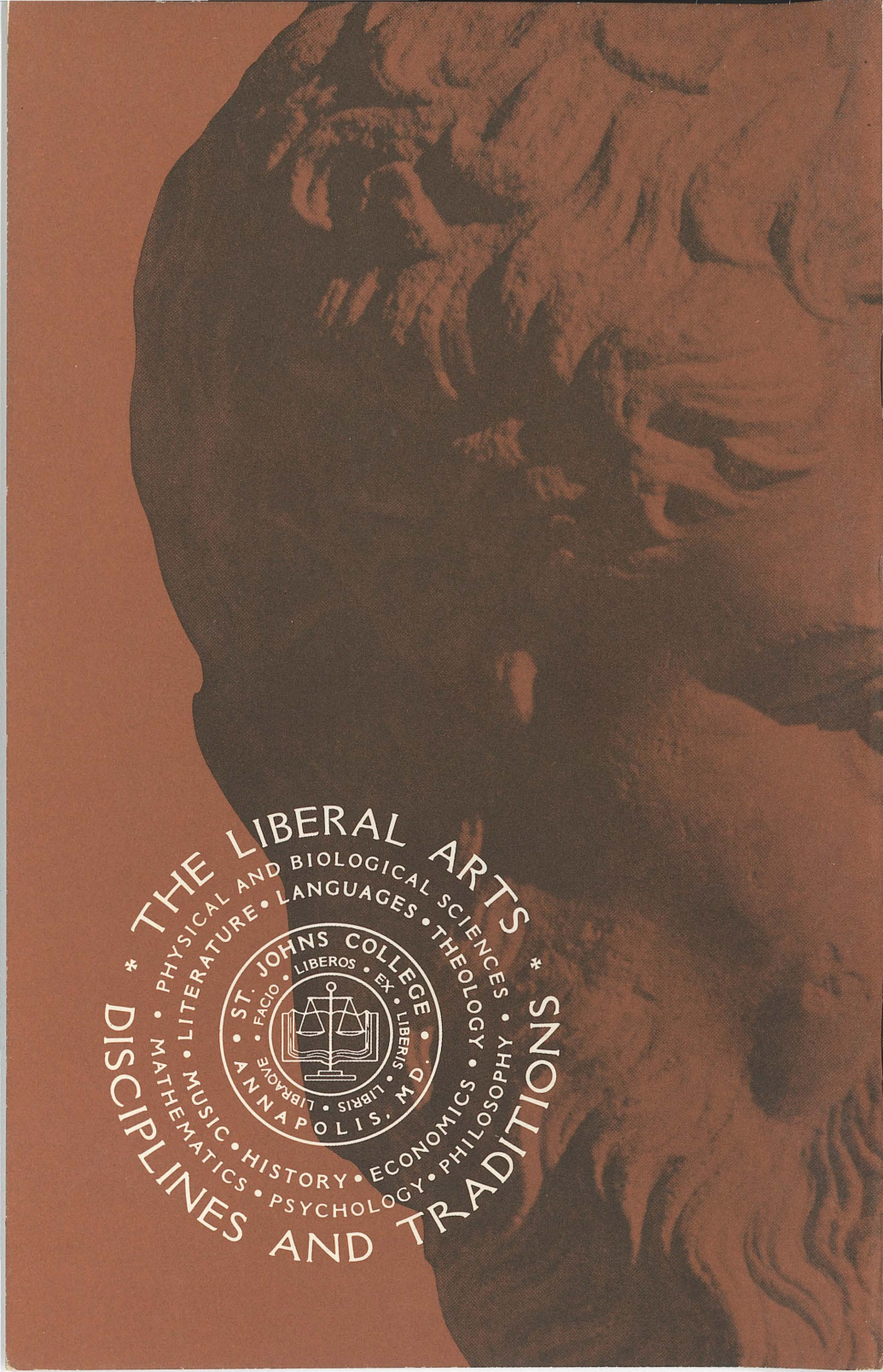
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