DANIEL

(Final Chapel of the Academic Year 1953-54)

13 May 1954

Given on my return from a stay in Washington as Chairman of the Secretary of State's Public Committee on Personnel.
I have been reflecting a little on my experiences in the red tape jungle. Like most experiences in life, it arouses mixed emotions. The fundamental feeling with which I come home to these invied walls is that most people are loyal, honest, industrious. In addition, a great many are wise, high-minded, and devoted.

I think I have never seen people work as hard as many people do in the Department of State. If the students worked as hard in college as people work in Foggy Bottom, Phi Beta Kappa would be crowded--with sophomores.

On the other hand, there are some terrible characters, utterly vicious, unfair, two-faced, demagogic. You can add adjectives to taste. There are not many of them but they are noisy. You can make an intelligent inference as to who one of them is. It is obvious that I can admire one and trust him and I can heartily dislike and distrust and despise the other.

The first group, of course, are the hope of our government. The second are a danger. In my mind, they are not by any means the greatest danger. The danger is explicit to the point of being obvious and with every day it gets more obvious. You, at least, know whom you are fighting and if you are willing to be smeared with muck, tar and oil you can fight.

The people who trouble me most are the people who never read the Book of Daniel. I am not going to ask for a show of hands of those of you who have. I sat down the other day in preparation for this chapel and
read it straight through. It is a short book, only about twelve chapters. Even if the people in the Capital who disturb me most had ever read it, they did not know what it was all about. Daniel, you will remember—and this is sheer flattery to some of you—was a Jewish captive in Babylon in the Court of Nebuchadnezzar. The key to the story is that he took a position. He was told to eat the King's meat so as to be fat and well-favored. We would not say that now, we would say sleek and "arrow collar-like". But he refused to eat the King's food because it violated his principles. Instead he ate a diet of pulse and water. It would never get by in Sharpe Refectory, but he flourished. Then the King had a very bad dream that bothered him, so he called in his psychoanalyst. But the psychoanalyst was so jittery that he did not dare tell the King the facts of life. Daniel, on the contrary read out the meanings of the dreams without any qualifications whatever. The news was all bad, but the King kept his word and gave Daniel more and more power. Daniel served three kings, giving them all bad news. Finally his jealous rivals had their revenge. They persuaded the King to declare himself a God, and require all to worship him. Daniel respectfully declined because of his principle to which he had clung all through three reigns. As a result he paid his famous visit to the lions. In short, Daniel was an individualist. He was not well adjusted to his environment. If there is anything I hate it is people well adjusted to their environment. Daniel had a wholly different ideal. He was oriented to something that transcended his environment. He did not bend or bow or compromise or truckle. He did not do anything that ran contrary to his principles. When the sycophants and the timid men and the placemen and servants and all the multitude of the faceless characters who wanted to get ahead in the world told him how foolish he was, it had no...
effect upon him whatever except to make him, if possible, a little more stubborn than he had been to begin with.

Now the people in Washington who scare me to death are not the vicious characters who can be exposed. The frightening crowd are the seers the wisemen, the magicians in the biblical sense, who say whatever they think will be agreeable to those in power but who do nothing. I thought before I got there that I understood the inertia of bureaucracy for I had seen the bureaucracy in action many years ago. I taught Government for many years. I have written at least one book against bureaucracy and made innumerable speeches against it. But in all my dreams I never expected to see the foot-shufflers, the people who are apparently in motion but getting nowhere so firmly mobilized as they are in the bureaucracy in Washington.

The Department of State was the first department of the Government to be organized. The statute which created it was a model. To begin with it was brief. If you can find any law passed by Congress today which is brief that, in itself, is a triumph. Moreover, the Department had a unique position. It did not have to report to Congress as all the others do. It reported only to the President. Its structure was made subject to the orders of the Secretary so that he could change it at his will.

Slowly the authority of the Secretary was weakened; complicated statutes added to the original grant of power. Certain offices were fixed by law. The one that Mr. McLeod* has, for example, is fixed by law. The Foreign Service became semi-independent. The Civil Service became not only a protection against politics but the law conferred almost complete immunity against any discipline; if you were idle at your desk no one could discipline

*Head of the Visa Section, and the enemy of independent men.
you for it. In 1949, under the inspiration of the Hoover Commission of which (though this has been a secret to you heretofore) Dean Acheson was the Vice Chairman), an act was passed which was designed to restore to the Secretary of State the control over the department for which he was responsible. It gave him back some of the authority over the Foreign Service which had been taken away from him. This revised statute was clear. His authority was well-defined and the Secretary was at last put in a position to act. With the customary speed of secretaries, he did act--two years later. In March of 1951, he issued a directive. Now, within the Department of State a directive has the force of law. That is to say, when the Secretary says, this is it--that is all there is to it. That is it.

Yet I came into the Department almost three years to the day after that directive was issued and yet that order had had no result. It took me two months of digging to find out how and why. It took me still longer to believe what I found to be the facts. When the job was done there was not one single soul in the Department to whom I could point my finger and say, "He defied the Secretary." The things the Secretary had directed to be done were done in form but not in substance. There had been a great deal of motion but no one had gotten anywhere.

This all came home to me as we were drafting our report* which has to be presented next Tuesday to the Secretary of State. I saw a memorandum which was not addressed to me and was not supposed to be seen by me. It was from one of the departmental officers in which he told everybody who received his memo to read our report and do nothing. It was, as I explained to the Under Secretary, a clarion call to all the foot-shufflers in the

*"Toward a Stronger Foreign Service," June, 1954.
Department to mobilize to shuffle their feet but do nothing. It did not suggest that anybody should show the courage to defy our report. It did not suggest that anybody should argue against the report or show what, if they thought something was wrong, was wrong. They were not even going to refuse to move. They were just to move in the same spot and get nowhere. Those of you in the ROTC understand—In Place—March.

These people were to march and make their knees go up and down like mad but—never get off the rug. These were the soothsayers. These are the seers. These are the wisemen. These are the magicians who did not dare to stand up before a chairman, much less a king. These are the sycophants who speak fair to your face. Indeed this very man had come into my office, not at my invitation but by his own will, to tell me he was heartily behind me. He was—way behind. I tell you this for a reason: I have for you a year end hope. I never come to chapel on this last day of the college year without realizing that some of you will come back and others will leave us. Wherever you are, here or elsewhere, I hope you will join that first group of which I spoke—the loyal, the industrious, even the devoted. Wherever you serve and whatever you do, do your work with all your heart and all your mind and all your spirit.

Experience—and all history—remind me regretfully that some of you will do wrong. You will do wrong consciously; knowing that what you do is wrong you will still do what is wrong. I hope the number will be few. But above all I beg you, do not join that faceless multitude who yield up their God given right to be individuals, who seek to adjust themselves to their environment, that is, to lose themselves in the crowd. They are afraid to take a position; they go through life avoiding responsibility, going through the motions but hiding behind their fellows. Those are the
people who make citizenship sterile. Those are the people who make Government costly and often futile. Those are the people who make the churches vapid. Those are the people who make education a pale imitation of the dynamic force it ought to be in American life.

With all your reading, read at least once the Book of Daniel. Read it understandingly and take it to heart.