WHY JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN STUDIES?

It is the hope of the founders of the Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies that, with the help of God, it will develop into a center, first of all of research and publication, and then, secondly, of education. So this is a report, not of things done, rather of things to be done and their background.

Undoubtedly, it is easier and more pleasant to speak of achievements, but achievements speak for themselves while plans are mute. Hence they seek to be told, so that friends may share in them. And such sharing is good, even necessary, it seems to me; for those engaged in research and scholarship, more than most, need the support of friendship. If they are to work well, they have indeed to work in seclusion, but unless they leave their retreats from time to time, they will hardly attain wisdom, for not proud isolation but love leads to truth.

People have always thought of philosophers and scholars as odd, I fear. Right at the beginning of Western philosophy, there is the story about the (Thracian) servant maid, who laughed at the (Greek philosopher)
Thales of Miletus. While gazing into the heavens, the philosopher forgot what lay before him, and so fell into a well. How queer, how impractical! she must have thought.

There may well be people here who might say of the Institute: How queer, how impractical! The teaching of classes, which lead to a degree and help in a career—that's sensible. But research! What's the good of that?

The answer is simple. Though many men have made Communism what it is today, it might not have been at all were it not for one man, who for years, day after day, sat in the British Museum, studying and writing.

Apart from that, in this age of ours, with its worship of the useful, it is good to do the things that are not of immediate use. But I'm afraid it is a deep-seated notion, not to say prejudice, that men devoted to research are impractical.

You all remember, I am sure, how Gulliver came in his travels to Laputa, an island of learned men. This is how he described them:

"Their Heads were all reclined to the Right, or the Left; one of their Eyes turned inward, and the other directly up to the Zenith."
of them was accompanied by a servant carrying a short stick, to which was fastened a bladder with little pebbles inside. With this he would softly flap his master on the eyes, whenever, "wrapped up in cogitation," he was in danger of bouncing his head against a post.

And when two were together, it was the office of this servant gently to strike the mouth of the one and the ear of the other, for, to quote Swift, "the Minds of these People are so taken up with intense Speculations, that they can neither speak, nor attend to the Discourses of others, without being rouzed by some external Taction upon the Organs of Speech and Hearing."

Swift is a satirist, of course, and his description is a caricature. Men so remote that they feel neither the desire nor the need to commune would be poor, lonely creatures, wouldn't they? For, to say it again: the man of learning must be a man of love.

Today, (however,) scholarship, the things of the mind, are looked on not so much as odd, rather as suspect. Without question, there have been many who misused their minds, who used them only to rebel against truth and virtue, faith and love, against God, against Christ and His Church.