

# The Princeton Seminary Bulletin

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## THE SEMINARY IN WAR TIME

### I

WITH the entry of the United States into the world struggle the fact of war ceased to be a distant reality of which only echoes reached our cloistered quiet. From being a tragedy which we lamented, a subject of earnest discussion and the theme of much prayer, war was transformed over night into a challenge to action.

While the Christian Church as such does not make war and never can be at war, the country to which, under God, the Church in America owes many of its precious liberties, is at war. Millions of Christian men and women in the United States who are members of the Church are involved directly in the war effort. The Church has a responsibility to undertake the shepherding of these millions and to aid, by all the means in its power, a multitude of others who do not belong to its membership. It is obligated also to confront, in the name of God and in the spirit of Jesus Christ, the new human situation created in this country following the disruption of normal life. Having this in mind, Princeton Seminary girded itself immediately to play its part in meeting the new needs of the Church and the nation.

### II

The realities of the new situation were vividly brought home to the Seminary campus when one of the most distinguished members of the Senior Class, son of a Presbyterian minister, and a graduate of Harvard University, was called up for service in the army as a reserve officer. In view of the circumstances of the case and the distinguished record of the student in question, the Faculty of the Seminary agreed to allow him to terminate his studies in January and graduate with his class in May.

The campus was subsequently visited on two successive weeks by the Chief Chaplain of the Navy, Captain Robert D. Workman, one of our own Alumni, who presented the challenge of the men in the fleet for the dedication of life to chaplaincy service. Our students have been encouraged to believe that there are few places where they can render more needed service at the present time than with the men who have surrendered their all in response to the call of their country. We make it equally clear that the chaplaincy, whether in the Army or in the Navy, is so important that

the very best ministers that the Church can supply are needed for that service. Attention is drawn to the fact that it would be a calamity of the first magnitude that any should be admitted to the position of chaplain who are personally unworthy, or who have volunteered from unworthy motives. In this connection the Alma Mater of three thousand living ministers sounds an appeal that every one of that number who is within the age limits laid down for candidates for chaplaincy positions, ask himself before God whether the present situation does not constitute a special call to him.

### III

On the other hand, the Faculty of the Seminary has not considered that the present situation requires, or that the best needs of theological education or of the Christian Church would be served by introducing a full summer term to accelerate the conclusion of ministerial preparation. The reasons that weighed with the Faculty in deciding that the plan of acceleration adopted in the majority of colleges, was neither wise nor necessary in the case of a seminary, were as follows:

Seminary students, whether rightly or wrongly—and we believe rightly—are exempted from military service. They are free, in consequence, to terminate their studies in the normal way. However much they might accelerate their course, the army would not accept them without several years of experience in the pastorate. As seminary students, on the other hand, they will be in a position to undertake responsibilities in churches which have given up their own pastors for chaplaincy service.

There is, besides, a very great difference between the status of courses in a liberal arts college and the status of seminary courses. If a liberal arts student should be called into service before the normal termination of his studies, the more subjects he has had the opportunity to take, the better will it be for him in the interests of his general culture. But in almost no instance will he be required, save in a general way, to make use of those studies in connection with his career as a soldier or sailor. The Seminary, on the other hand, is a professional school. The knowledge and skill which a theological student acquires from the mastery of certain courses constitute an essential part of his preparation for the ministry. If, for any reason, he fails to do justice to these courses he will be seriously handicapped all his life. He would prove a poor minister wherever he served, whether with the armed forces or among people engaged in the ordinary routine of life. This same criterion has prevailed in another great professional school of a different kind, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This institution, in the interests of its own graduates and the service they can render, has consistently refused to carry acceleration to the pitch that many other secular institutions have done.

It must never be forgotten, moreover, that what laboratory instruction and experience are to a student of the sciences, whether theoretical or applied, direct work among people during three or four months in the summer is to a student of theology. Last year almost every student in Princeton Seminary engaged in some form of religious work during the summer vacation. It is the unanimous opinion of these students that nothing in

their academic preparation can become a substitute for such practical experience. Initiation, under laboratory conditions, into the real tasks of the ministry, gives students of theology a new interest in study, so that the value of their academic work, following periods of service on the field, is very greatly enhanced. Alas for that young man whom a misguided zeal plunges into the realities of life after a forty-eight week year for two successive years, without his having had any opportunity to try himself out for a reasonably prolonged period ministering to the spiritual needs of men and women! There are laws of growth which we violate at our peril; and there are cases in which the surest way, and perhaps the speediest way, to reach an ultimate goal is to hasten slowly.

It is important to observe in this connection that a leading American seminary which had decided to inaugurate a summer term dropped the idea immediately when the Faculty discovered that out of two hundred and fifty students only ten were interested in returning for summer work.

Nevertheless, while the introduction of a special summer term does not appear to be the way in which the Church and the nation can be best served in the present crisis, the Faculty of Princeton Seminary will be willing to respond to emergency appeals and will allow outstanding students to graduate in less than the normal time. Not only so; the Seminary will admit without delay students who are graduated from college at mid-year. Special introductory courses will be provided for such students to enable them to finish their seminary course exactly three years from the time of their admission.

#### IV

No one can tell, of course, how the prolongation of the war will affect the enrollment of students and the normal life of the Seminary. We anticipate, as other seminaries do, that the entering class in 1942 will be smaller than the class enrolled in 1941. We know of a number of students who would ordinarily be coming to the Seminary next year who have felt it to be their duty as Christians and as citizens to volunteer for active service. So important is it, however, that the ranks of the Christian ministry should be maintained at full strength in the present crisis, that it would be disastrous if candidates for the ministry dropped to a low level in quality or in quantity. The Seminary looks, therefore, at this time to its Alumni to keep the claims of Christ's service in the ministry before the ablest Christian young men in their congregations and their sphere of influence. When the present horror shall have ended, the Church of Jesus Christ will need as never before in her history, the largest possible number of consecrated sons and daughters, to face a world that in the interval, will have rediscovered and applied to itself the forgotten designation "lost."

J. A. M.