

The Princeton Seminary Bulletin



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THE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIFTH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT

The Commencement of nineteen forty-seven marked the return to the practice of having but one such occasion a year. During the war as many as four commencements had been held in a period of eleven months. The Chapel of the University, which is so graciously placed at the disposal of the Seminary each year, was thronged. Exactly one hundred degrees were conferred by President Mackay. For the first time in the history of the institution, the degree of Master of Religious Education, M.R.E. (Prin.) was given. Six young women, all college graduates, were granted their degree for completing the prescribed three year course. There were fifty-three Bachelors of Divinity, thirty-seven Masters of Theology and four Doctors of Theology. The names of those upon whom degrees were conferred and awards bestowed are published in this issue of the Bulletin.

The Commencement address was delivered by the Reverend Benjamin J. Bush, D.D., of Geneva, Switzerland. His message is here presented to the Alumni. Also in this issue appear the Words of Farewell to the New Graduates by President Mackay. One of the most stirring aspects of the impressive commencement exercises each year is the glorious music provided by the Westminster Choir College.

The day before Commencement was one of club and class reunions, with the Class of 1897 holding the spotlight in its fiftieth anniversary. The President's Reception at Springdale was followed by the Alumni dinner when more than one hundred and sixty former students of the Seminary were present. At that gathering, Dr. Frank Aydelotte spoke on the Palestinian problem, and Dr. Mackay on the Seminary and its future.

The following were elected as officers of the Alumni Association for the coming year: President, Alexander Mackie, Class of 1910, president of the Presbyterian Minister's Fund, Philadelphia; Vice-President, John Arthur Visser, Class of 1929, pastor of the Westminster Church, Detroit, Michigan; Secretary, C. Ralston Smith, Class of 1937, pastor of the Pine Street Church, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Treasurer, Charles R. Erdman, Class of 1891, Professor of Practical Theology, Emeritus. Those elected to the Alumni Council for a term of three years were: Thomas Sinclair Dickson, Class of 1912, pastor of the First Church, York, Pennsylvania, and Raymond I. Lindquist, Class of 1933, pastor of the First Church, Orange, New Jersey.

TIGHTEN THE BELT OF TRUTH*

JOHN A. MACKAY

MEMBERS of the graduating group: It falls to me, at the close of these exercises, to leave with you some words of farewell. In saying to you what is on my heart, I make myself simply the voice, the mouthpiece, of Princeton Seminary, passing on to you what my colleagues on the Faculty who have been your teachers would want me to say, something also that is in the spirit of the religious heritage to which we all belong.

It will always be your distinction as a group that you constitute the largest number ever to graduate together from Princeton Theological Seminary—one hundred strong in all. It is your distinction, also, to represent the most diversified group ever to graduate from the Seminary; for the first time in the Seminary's history four different degrees are being conferred. Of course, I need not remind you, although I do so with pleasure, that today a new degree has been conferred for the first time, the degree of Master of Religious Education, M.R.E. (Prin.)

But what is much more important is that a distinction of another kind should become yours, not one which any institution can bestow, but which you must win in God's service on the road of life. As I thought of these closing moments, there came to me very forcibly some words of St. Paul which he wrote in a letter that has always been a very great favorite of mine, the Epistle to the Ephesians. In the version with which we are most familiar, the King James Version, the words read, "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." In another great modern version, that of James Moffatt, the same words are rendered: "Tighten the

belt of truth about your loins." That is the distinction which in the name of your Alma Mater I wish you to have, to be braced up by Truth. As some of you return to active life where already you have served in parishes or on the battle front, and others enter upon active service for the first time, I trust it will be the distinction of you all, to live with your loins girt about with truth, with the girdle, the belt of truth, tightened around you. For Christian truth is a belt which equips for life and service him who wears it, fitting him for the pilgrim way and the crusading march.

If you have learned one thing more than another on the Seminary campus, you have learned that truth exists. You will not, of course, go out into life with unwarranted presumption, with the intolerable cocksureness of people who feel that they have the truth, all the truth, and that nobody else has any. You will, however, go out believing that truth is not a butterfly or a bird to be pursued as a pastime, but something from which we start, something which we can grasp, or rather, that grasps us, that becomes a belt to gird us, to brace us up.

While, therefore, you are never going to say that you know all the truth, or that you are the only people who have the truth, you are going to face life believing that you have been grasped by the truth and that it is yours to tighten its reality around you, ready for the march, equipped for the fray. Only by so doing will there be that definiteness about your message

* Words of farewell to the new graduates by the President of the Seminary.

which is worthy of the Christian heritage, and you will have that authority which the men and women of our generation demand and so sorely need. If you tighten, and keep on tightening, the belt of truth around you, your life will never have that flabbiness, that slothfulness, that slovenliness which is the unhappy distinction of so many who profess to preach the everlasting Gospel in the name of the ever-living God.

And there is something more to remember. In our holy Christian faith truth is not only something very bracing, but something very personal. Christian truth is personal truth, because there is a Person who is the Truth. One of the very precious things about the Christian religion, as indeed one of the exceedingly paradoxical things about it, is that Jesus Christ, the personal Truth, engirdles us as a belt. The deepest meaning, therefore, in this injunction of the great Apostle, is that you be engirdled with that living Truth Himself. If you do the belt becomes an arm. Then on your pilgrim way, you will feel that you are being grasped, held fast, not by a belt which you tighten but by an arm which tightens around you; for Jesus Christ according to his promise continues

to be with pilgrims and crusaders on the King's highway.

In this way you will be spiritually braced. If that arm engirdles you, it will brace and tone you up. It will develop to the utmost all your capacities and talents, so that your judgment will have a keenness of apprehension, and your vision will never lose its clarity. What is more, you will enjoy a serenity, a calm, a freedom from that neurotic plague which has become the bane of our time. What is more, a holy, divine strength will be yours, that will enable you to reach the goal, to be the kind of people you want to be, the kind of people that our confused and shattered world needs you to be, the kind of graduates that your Alma Mater prays that by God's grace you may be.

So, tighten the belt of truth about your loins! Set your feet on the highway! Keep going! Find your frontier! Stand there and die fighting, in the everlasting companionship of Him who said: "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"—Jesus Christ the Truth.

If it should never be our privilege to meet again as a group, let us meet yonder, beyond the frontier, and listen together to the "well done" of Him who girded us on the way.

SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The School of Christian Education is an integral part of the Seminary, hence the degree of Bachelor of Arts, or its academic equivalent, is required for entrance. The three year course leads to the degree of Master of Religious Education, M.R.E. (Prin.). There is a great demand for the men and women who complete the course, as teachers of the Christian religion in

schools and colleges, directors of religious education, assistant ministers, missionary educators at home and abroad.

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