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THE RÔLE OF PRINCETON SEMINARY

THE primary and most important function of a theological seminary is to prepare heralds of the Gospel and shepherds of souls. This function is worthily discharged when the Seminary makes adequate provision for the progress of its students in learning and piety. For "religion without learning or learning without religion in the ministry of the Gospel must ultimately prove injurious to the Church." (Plan of Princeton Theological Seminary) Neither of these can be a substitute for the other in a Christian minister. He must possess those "holy affections," regarding which Jonathan Edwards said: "True religion in great part consists in holy affections." He must possess equally a clear understanding of God's revelation in Christ and of the implications of this revelation for life in its fullness and its every sphere. Princeton Seminary has been consistently loyal to this great insight of its founders which they transmitted in the Plan of the Seminary as a mandate to their successors.

Some seminaries, however, of which this Seminary is one, have a further part to play in the religious life of their time. In addition to discharging the task common to all seminaries, it is theirs to match in the sphere of evangelical learning the studies offered by influential graduate colleges in the several branches of secular culture. That Princeton Seminary should discharge such a rôle is inherent in its nature and consonant with its tradition. It is a rôle, moreover, which the Seminary has fulfilled with distinction at different periods during its long history.

The religious crisis that besets mankind today is a call to Princeton Seminary to assume once again its historic rôle. It should aspire to nothing less than a place of decisive leadership in the theological world. Many circumstances favor the fulfillment of this aspiration. New winds and tides of God are in motion. To begin with, theology is more needed in the life and thought of today, and is more earnestly studied, than it has been for many a generation. Evidence multiplies among high school boys and university students, among ministers and laymen, of a craving to understand the Christian faith and to possess a luminous and well-articulated system of belief. It is well that this should be so, for otherwise the Christian Church would run the risk of being out-thought by its new rivals, those totalitarian political systems which have assumed the rôle of churches.

It is not, however, theology in general that is needed most, but confessional theology, theology that is hammered out within the fellowship of the Church and becomes an instrument of the Church Militant at a time when new rivals challenge her claims. There are professors of theology who teach in independent seminaries or in the theological faculties of universities who today would welcome chairs in church-related institutions.

Still more significant is the fact that the theological tradition which is most relevant to the deepest needs of our time is the theology that is ordinarily designated "Cal-

THE CHURCH'S TASK IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF UNITY

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AT the opening of the World Conference on Faith and Order in Lausanne in 1927, Bishop Brent laid down three fundamental propositions: 1. God wills unity. 2. The world is too strong for a divided Church. 3. We can unite if we will. At the opening of the Edinburgh Conference, the Archbishop of York made this statement: "A church divided in its manifestation to the world cannot render its due service to God and to man, and for the impotence which our sin has brought upon the Church through divisions in its outward aspect we should be covered with shame and driven to repentance." Such strong assertions naturally raise the question, What is meant by unity, and when is unity—that is, Christian unity, or the unity of the Church—achieved?

I.

The meanings of unity had been studied in preparation for the two World Conferences. Edinburgh considered unity mainly from the viewpoint of Faith and Order, as Oxford had as its objective unity in Life and Work. Of the pamphlets published on different aspects of Church Unity, the one by Professor Angus Dun entitled, *The Meaning of Unity*, is very illuminating, as is the book by Dr. Paul Douglass, *A Decade of Progress in Church Unity*.

The two Conferences were themselves manifestations of Christian unity. To bring such large and representative bodies of people together from all quarters of the globe, to hold them together for two weeks as their attention centered upon Christ and His will for the Church and the world, was to a large extent a realization of our Lord's prayer "that they all might be one." The

messages drafted as expressing the mind and spirit of both Conferences, and unanimously approved, were spiritual achievements in line with Christ's purpose for His Church.

And yet that unity was weakened by marked differences of opinion and conspicuous division. In Oxford, by a special action of the Anglican Church, we were invited to the Lord's table, but the elements could be distributed only by Episcopal hands. In Edinburgh, we had a communion service in St. Giles, to which all Christians, in keeping with Presbyterian custom, were invited. But the Greek Orthodox Church representatives had their own communion in another church, and the Anglicans had theirs also in a separate church. From the viewpoint of mutual recognition and reciprocity, the lines of division still hold in certain quarters, just as we have churches of the same confession, of the same polity and worship, but maintaining a separated and often competitive existence.

In the Scriptures the Church is called the body of Christ, and we are told there is one body, with several members, to be sure, but functioning as a living whole,—so that unity, to be real and vital and effective, must be *corporate*,—such a oneness as Christ prayed for, and which by its witness would impress an unbelieving world,—such a oneness as is urged in the Epistles—far removed from the petty bickering and pusillanimous quarrelings of children, and approaching the stature, the manliness of Christ. It is not a matter of programs or platforms, but a spiritual attainment marked by absolute surrender and whole-hearted allegiance to Christ, that He may be all and is all. Christ who is the light of

the world is one, the source of all true unity. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels when the human element, marked by selfish blindness and indifference, is in evidence and obscures the light. The restless millions wait the light whose dawning maketh all things new. Christ also waits, but men are slow and late. Have the Churches done what they could? Are they doing what they might, presenting the whole truth as it is in Christ by a united witness?

II.

The world situation, confronting and challenging the Christian Churches, makes unity imperative; God wills it. The service of the hour demands it. The idea of a World Conference on Faith and Order was born at the *International Missionary Conference* held in Edinburgh twenty-seven years ago. At that Conference the whole missionary problem in all its phases, in its worldwide sweep, was graphically portrayed. And men like Bishop Brent readily perceived that the task of world evangelization could never be performed by a divided church. Bishop Brent had been a missionary in the Philippine Islands. High Churchman that he was, he soon learned that to give the gospel to the people of that land no one church could meet the obligation. It would require all the churches in united and sacrificial action to evangelize the Philippine Islands. And so that man of vision proposed a World Conference of all churches acknowledging Christ as their divine Saviour and Lord. At the Lausanne Conference in 1927 the strongest appeal for union came from the foreign missionaries. It was stated that while in the homeland church union might seem desirable, on the foreign field it was a necessity. At the recent Edinburgh Conference the Bishop of Dornekal, in a burning appeal for unity in India, spoke of a Hindu representing a large body of his fellow-religionists, who had decided to cast aside their

ancestral faith, and they were seeking the more excellent way. Bishop Azariah presented the claims of Christianity, and the man was profoundly impressed. But there was one great obstacle. Christianity, like Hinduism, was a divided institution with denominations corresponding to different castes. How could spiritual unity be found in such a system? Was not Mohammedanism more united and more forceful?

The greatest progress towards church unity has been made in foreign lands. Churches which cannot unite at home are one body abroad. Hence we have the Church of Christ in Japan, China, the Philippines, not to mention other lands. But in all mission lands there is the demand for more Christian unity. One example that should appeal to us is found in Iran, where there are two missions, that of our church in the north, and that of the Anglican Church in the south. There are a number of strong and urgent reasons why the two churches—one a Presbyterian body and the other an Anglican body—should unite. The members and ministers of the two churches, the mission of our Board and of the Church Missionary Society, all favor union. There are difficulties in the way, but there is hope that the principles of the South India scheme may be applied to this simple situation. And it is well to note that the Edinburgh Conference put itself on record to this effect: "It regards the scheme for Church Union in South India, about which three churches are now negotiating as deserving particular attention and study because in it an attempt is being made to include within a united church communions holding to the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Congregational principles."

The theme of the Oxford Conference was "The Church in Relation to the Community and the State, a World Issue." And the message which the Conference adopted and has sent out to the churches stresses the dangers of national egotism,

the deification of the state as a new form of idolatry, and leading inevitably to division and disaster. The states which seek a totalitarian jurisdiction over every human relationship and department of life find the principles of Christ antagonistic to their aims and therefore set up some kind of rival religion, a neo-paganism, shrine worship, anything which may be urged as a claim upon loyalty to the state. The ancient conflict of Christianity with Caesarism and heathenism is being renewed. Thus not only in Europe, but in Asia, a new menace has arisen threatening the very life of the Church. The weak and struggling churches are looking to the stronger churches for sympathy and support. And when it is asked, What can the Church do? the answer is given, "The first duty of the Church and its greatest service to the world is to be in very deed the Church, confessing the true faith committed to the fulfillment of the will of Christ and united in Him in the fellowship of love and service."

It was my privilege to attend the Harvard Tercentenary, and the claim was repeatedly urged that in education the world will find unity and freedom. But the confession had to be made that with all the progress of intelligence there is an increase of oppression, strife, a glaring lack of unity and freedom in the world of today; so much so that some have declared that this present age will be referred to by coming generations as one of the "dark ages." A representative of the University of Paris, in contrasting the confusion in the present time with a unity and liberty of some former eras, contended that in the earlier university life which dominated thought and action there was the recognition of a higher authority, a sovereignty which transcended all minor allegiances. Harvard was founded for Christ and the Church. Her motto, *veritas*, is a reminder of the original intent to teach and apply the truth as it is in Jesus. The Church as

a witness to a sovereign Lord, the blessed and only potentate, the Church vitalized, unified, is the world's one hope of unity and freedom.

The Church of Christ throughout the world looked forward to the conferences of Oxford and Edinburgh with large and eager expectation. For both of them long and extensive preparations had been made. The aim had been to enlist the best thought of Christendom and secure the strongest representatives from the churches for the consideration of problems related to more effective service in advancing Christ's Kingdom, and although differences of view and of principle were revealed that could not be reconciled, great gains were made, and a notable unity of opinion and purpose was recorded.

III.

What contribution, it may be asked, did the Edinburgh Conference make toward the achievement of Church unity?

1. There was a sincere and courageous recognition of the indefensibility of a divided Christendom, coupled with a sense of shame and the urge to repent. Both at Oxford and Edinburgh, the realization of the weakness of the Church through lack of unity, and the feeling of contrition were forcibly expressed. Note the strong language of Archbishop Temple: "It should be horrible to speak or think of any fellow Christians as 'not in communion with us.' God grant that we may feel the pain of it and under that impulsion strive the more earnestly to remove all that now hinders us from receiving together the one Body of our Lord that in Him we may become one body, the organ and the vehicle of the one Spirit."

2. There was at Edinburgh a clear-cut, earnest, determined *will* for unity. If there were any communions or representatives of churches indifferent, complacent, unconcerned about the present status of churches in themselves or in their relation to other

churches, they maintained a discreet silence. There was outspoken gratitude for all progress made in the direction of union, and a well-grounded optimism as to the greater things promised in Christ's name.

3. Differences of theological opinion, of ecclesiastical tradition and practice were frankly faced, openly and thoroughly discussed, and the major agreements with the minor disagreements were honestly recorded. At Edinburgh as compared with Lausanne, the problems centering in the ministry, the sacraments, the nature of the Church, were more thoroughly considered, and there was a real advance made towards better understanding and the hope of final oneness of mind and heart. The statements of such Anglican divines as the Bishop of Gloucester regarding sacramental grace, and the priesthood of the ministry, as issuing from the priesthood of believers, would satisfy Presbyterian claims.

4. The Reports worked out in four sections and discussed in sessions on these subjects: "The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ," "The Church of Christ and the Word of God," "The Church of Christ and the Ministry and the Sacraments," "The Church's Unity in Life and Worship," and the supplementary subject, "The Communion of Saints," were unanimously approved. Dissenting opinions, however, as expressed in these reports, were registered, e.g., the views of the Friends on the Sacrament, the position of the Baptists regarding infant baptism.

5. The Edinburgh Conference concurred with the Oxford Conference in submitting to the churches a Plan for a World Council of Churches to incorporate the work being carried on by Life and Work,

and Faith and Order, and bring into affiliation other world movements, e.g., the International Missionary Council, The World Student Christian Federation, The World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, etc. The working out of a detailed plan was referred to a joint committee called the "Constituent Committee of Fourteen," which is arranging for the meeting of a Provisional Conference to meet in Holland in May, 1938.

6. The affirmation of unity marked the closing business of the Conference, and after its adoption unanimously there was issued this call to prayer which also received unanimous support:

"We have met at a time of great strain and distress alike in Europe and the Far East. We watch with sympathy and sorrow the menace and the horrors of war. We are persuaded that war never occurs except as an expression and result of that sin from which Christ came to redeem the world. We therefore call all men, and ourselves before all others, to pray that God may give to us and to all men the love of justice, the readiness to forgive, the knowledge of His will and the courage to obey it. For all who bear rule in their nations we ask the abundant bestowal of those gifts, and we pray that despite all earthly causes of estrangement, Christians in all lands may be united in the fellowship of prayer and obedience."

Then in St. Giles' Cathedral a large assemblage engaged in an uplifting service of thanksgiving, joining with deep feeling in the hymn, "Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices, Who marvelous things hath done."