

# The Princeton Seminary Bulletin



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# The Princeton Seminary Bulletin

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## THE STUDENT CENTER

THE campaign for the Student Center building, which was inaugurated last November in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, is drawing to a close. It has been relatively successful. The word "successful" is used in speaking of this effort because, taking into account actual contributions and pledges, and money contributed to the Seminary in the course of the last year which is available for this project, a total sum of more than two hundred and thirty thousand dollars has been raised. This is no insignificant amount. On the other hand, the success that has attended the campaign must be qualified by the term "relative," in as much as certain special gifts which we had hoped to receive have not materialized up to the present on account of disturbed conditions in high business circles. The new taxation and fears regarding the future led to a postponement of some contributions upon which we had dared to count. Our faith is strong, however, that they will eventually be made. But whether these exceptional gifts are contributed or not, the important thing is that the movement for the Student Center is gaining momentum, that it has met with an unusual response from Princeton Seminary Alumni and many others, and that the need and possibilities of the new building have captured the imagination of a host of friends, new and old.

By the time these words are read the official campaign will have ended, but the unofficial effort will have taken its place, to continue until the goal is reached. Because we need a worthy center of community life on this campus, we believe that in the not distant future we shall have one, through the blessing of God and the cooperation of friends whose hearts He touches. And when we do, it will be our affectionate concern to make sure that all that has been best in the traditions and spirit of our historic clubs shall be perpetuated in the common campus home. To adapt reverently an Apocalyptic passage from the Scriptures: "All the glory and honour of — Benham and Friar, Calvin and Warfield, Canterbury and Adelphian — shall be brought into it." Nothing from the past that ought to be conserved shall be lost. Many things, moreover, which it has been found impossible to accomplish hitherto in the interests of our students and Alumni and the Church at large, because of the lack of proper facilities, will, we trust, be achieved tomorrow when the new Student Center has reared its graceful form upon the campus.

## DEMOCRACY AND THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY\*

THE REV. JOHN R. CUNNINGHAM, D.D.

*President of Davidson College*

THE discussion of Democracy this year is timely. One may risk being trite, but he will be dealing with that subject which is more to the fore in popular thinking than any other. The danger is that we have not thought deeply nor seriously enough about Democracy. Our anxiety about our way of life is all absorbing. We are threatened from without and within. Our dilemma as individuals and as a nation is to discover what constitutes real and enduring defense. Of course, we will recognize to begin with that Democracy is more than a form of government. It is more than a political system. If it were nothing more, we need not be so disturbed. As a matter of fact, Democracy thoroughly understood, is our way of life, based upon the deepest of convictions and built upon the most abiding spiritual principles. Fundamental spiritual considerations are involved when one attempts to define and to defend Democracy.

I propose to emphasize the conviction that the Christian Ministry is in the front line of defense. It is our business to see that we are not sidetracked from the building of a Democracy which is worth defending. Our chief danger is from within. Democracies are always in far more danger of committing suicide than of being overwhelmed and conquered from without. In fact, the question may well be raised whether a Democracy can ever be defeated until it has decayed from within. The history of Israel throws considerable light on

that thought. The intimate relation between the inner morale and the outer defense of a people is more vital than the average citizen knows. Whatever may be said about the necessity of military defense at this or any other time—and wiser persons than I must decide that matter—our Democracy will always depend chiefly on other than military strength for its most certain defense. Lincoln once said "If ever America perishes it will not be because it is overpowered from without, but because it decayed from within."

There are three areas in which the Christian Ministry can and must function if Democracy is to stand in this time of world crisis.

1. The Ministry Must Proclaim the Fundamental Necessity of the Christian Gospel. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Christianity is the *sine qua non* of a firm Democracy. Christianity may not wholly depend upon Democracy, but surely Democracy depends on Christianity. There has been a government of the people under many and varying conditions. But government of the people, by the people, and for the people has issued only where the Christian Gospel has done its work. Thomas Mann has well said "Democracy is a polite name for the ideals Christianity brought into the world." In the

\* Address delivered in the chapel of Princeton University at the 129th Commencement of Princeton Theological Seminary, May 13, 1941.

same vein Judge John J. Parker of North Carolina has more recently stated "Democracy is the application of Christianity to the domain of government." Quoting further, President McCracken of Vassar has said "Democracy simply cannot exist without Christianity. It needs it as the skyscrapers need the bed rock of Manhattan for their foundation. It is the religion of Jesus that tells us that 'we are of more value than the sparrows; that the very hairs of our head are numbered.' We are of importance because we are of consequence to God." One cannot predict the solution of all the problems which now face us and which will face us when this present crisis has passed, but he is safe in the assumption that the ultimate solution of all our critical problems will be reached by men who think and speak and live as servants of Christ. This is only another way of saying that Christianity is essential to the world's security. It is peculiarly the task of the Minister to state that truth so repeatedly and so forcefully as to sink it deeply and indelibly into the consciousness of our generation. Hitler, who knows the ground work of Democracy better than many of us, acts logically when he silences the Christian Ministry in his desire to establish National Socialism. Let the Minister of the Gospel stand forth in the clear light of his great opportunity knowing assuredly and uttering it forcefully that he deals with the first essential of Democracy. The Gospel of Christ is that essential.

2. The Christian Minister Must Continue to Assert the Worth of the Individual. Christ says of individuals "Ye are of value." In a Democracy we believe that men are born free and equal. Every human being has value

as such, quite apart from his race, class, or nationality. Our danger is regimentation. Christ was ever and always stressing the value of the individual. How persistently he had to remind his followers of the inherent dignity of human personality. Let us note just two of the many illustrations. Zaccheus, a citizen of Jericho, was by no means popular. He was an unpopular man in an unpopular position. He had curiosity to see Jesus as he passed through. A great crowd thronged the Master. He could have preached to them as a tremendous congregation. Instead, he saw in this little outcast sort of citizen an opportunity for lasting good. Leaving the crowd, giving his attention to a person rather than to the crowd, he called Zaccheus down from the sycamore tree and suggested that he take him to his home, where, during the day, they readjusted many ill advised relations and left the home a happy Christian unit. Another incident of individual attention. It was noon-time. The disciples had gone into the village to get food. A poor woman, whose reputation was not good, whose character had been spoiled, whose self-confidence was at low ebb, came out to the well for water. With what tact and skill, with what penetrating understanding and calm spiritual reassurance did Jesus deal with her. She went back to save her whole village and lead them into a better life. The Christian religion will not allow us to overlook the individual.

Napoleon is said to have asked one of his aides about the strength of the army. The aide started specifying the various corps. Bluntly Napoleon replied "Never mind the integers—tell me the totals." That is never the Christian approach. The theory of



“Everything for the state, nothing against the state, and nothing outside the state” must be answered by the Christian claim of the supreme worth of humanity in its individual units. Let us continue as Ministers to think of individuals, cultivate individuals, and serve individuals. One wearies of so much bigness in our day. Big schools, big hospitals, big churches, and now big armies tend to obscure the worth and importance of the child of God as an individual. Only as your Ministry is an expression of the dignity and worth of the individual will it be Christ-like. A recent book entitled “Louisiana Hayride” attempts a true appraisal of Huey Long. One statement of significance in an understanding of his amazing heyday in Louisiana is this: “He had a sense of human beings.” The sense which he used for selfish and disgraceful ends the Christian Minister must use to the glory of Christ and the good of the people.

This recognition has a genuine influence not only on the pastoral but upon the preaching Ministry. The Minister who knows and cares deeply for his people will not fail to incorporate into his preaching those Gospel values which satisfy the hunger of their hearts. Dr. James Black, speaking to a group of American Ministers some time ago, made this statement to which we all do well to turn again and again, “When I think sometimes of the puzzled and burdened hearts in our congregations whose hurt is perhaps concealed under a twisted smile; business men and women who are worried equally by their problems of success and failure; young men and women fighting bravely the rising passion in their own blood and tempted to risk everything on some

wild throw; people with inarticulate prayers for the life or soul of some loved ones; a home with a big hole in it that nothing human can ever fill; nameless sorrows that tears can never ease and people who keep on living though they have nothing to live for; memories that are just one long ache or those that bite like a venom—when I remember all this I cannot but think that some of our smart, flashy sermons are as thoughtlessly cruel as they are impertinent. Get down deep, gentlemen. Get down deep.”

3. And then, *The Christian Ministry in Its Defense of Democracy Must Exemplify and Challenge the Courage Which Dares to Live for Those Values for Which Men Are Willing to Die.* Every passing day the lines are more clearly drawn. We are all in touch with youth which moves into organized positions where ultimate willingness to die for the cause is implicit in their call and response. There is something tremendous and dramatic about it. It is the function of the Christian Ministry to make clear now as always that the ultimate test of human loyalty is not death but life and character. Simon Peter made the typical mistake in this regard. He assumed that love and loyalty to Christ would be tested by his willingness to die with or for Him. Christ calmly and penetratingly showed him that his loyalty would not extend far when it came to facing life and its temptations. If comparison could be made—and it seems now late in the day to say this—Democracy stands far more in need of life and character than it does of death. Democracy must always be defended by people who believe in it enough to live for it. It has been strongest when men and women had deep personal convictions about

the foundations upon which it was built. You cannot defeat a Democracy like that.

It is a poor type of man who will not defend his home from one who would violate it—if to do so cost him his life. He will die for it if necessary. But are we living for our homes in America? Are the men of our country home centered men? Is the honor of the home and the moral and spiritual health of the family—foundation stones in a Democracy—are these the passions of American life? Or think of the Country. Patriotism has been too much confined to times of international stress and too closely associated in our thought with fighting and dying. The deeper patriotism calls for Christian character. Of course, we will die for America if the occasion demands but we have not yet faced the necessity of sacrificial Christian character to live for her. The pulpit of the American Church has a tremendous task in challenging our best people to a recognition under God of this urgency. Furthermore, we may illustrate this principle in the area of our faith. Men will die for their faith. A religious fight is the worst of battles. Strange to say, men with no great degree of religious fervor will take violent positions when contention arises, but to get people to live for their faith. Well, there's the rub. Someone has written

"So he died for his faith. That is fine—

More than most of us do.

But stay! Can you add to that line  
That he lived for it, too?

It is easy to die. Men have died

For a wish or a whim—

For bravado or passion or pride;  
Was it harder for him?

But to live; every day to live out

All the truth that he dreamt,

While his friends met his conduct  
with doubt

And the world with contempt.

Was it thus that he plodded ahead

Never turning aside?

Then we'll talk about the life he led—  
Never mind how he died."

These are days when men must stand for something and when they must answer for something. With all that is being said about defense we will do well to recognize that the first line of all defense is spiritual. Here is where the foundations must rest. Let the Ministry magnify its calling. Too great timidity, or too much of backwardness at a time when material and physical values are to the fore in the public thought, is to fail in a crucial hour. Let us, as ambassadors for God, stand forth with courage and understanding, with boldness and self-sacrifice. These are times which await the prophet of the most high God.