

# The Chicago Theological Seminary

## REGISTER

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### *The President's Message*

#### INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE WALLS

EVERY problem generally looks simple from the standpoint of one who is not directly engaged in solving it. Sometimes apparently simple projects become exceedingly complex when they are rightly understood. It seems as if the tasks of The Chicago Theological Seminary were perfectly definite and its program simple: It is a graduate institution receiving students for instruction within its walls, sending out those who have received its instruction as well-prepared church leaders. And such might be the case if we were to consider the Seminary only as a vocational graduate school for the training of ministers. The work within the walls is definite and can be done efficiently, granted sufficient resources in equipment and instruction. The Seminary, however, from its foundation in 1855, has been devoted to a task outside its walls. It belongs to the Congregational churches of the Middle West, and, while it never has limited its instruction to members of the Congregational churches, it has recognized a definite responsibility to its denominational constituency. The primary service which the Seminary can render to the churches and which always must be its principal engagement is the preparation of trained leaders. This, however, is not the entire

project. To help ministers on the field in their actual work, to inspire and undergird the work of every church in its particular situation, to be counselor and friend to the churches far and wide, is the task of the Seminary outside its walls. This does not mean that the Seminary interprets its work as in any way displacing the local and state organizations of the churches; it acts in closest co-operation with the existing institutions which express the larger fellowship of the individual churches in discharging their common tasks.

In order to carry on this double program, within and outside the Seminary walls, there must be such a division of labor as will not put in jeopardy the work of the Graduate School and its standards. In its old location at Union Park the Seminary was a law unto itself so far as conformity to academic standards not of its own making was concerned. This does not mean that the requirements were low; it suggests only the fact that it was unnecessary to check up to the standards of graduate departments of a university. On removing to the neighborhood of the University and accepting the responsibilities as well as the privileges of affiliation with the graduate groups, a new situation was faced. The University of Chicago undoubtedly ranks second to none in the United States in the high standards of its graduate schools. The Seminary must

# The New Courses in Literature and Drama

By FRED EASTMAN

THE Seminary's new program in religious literature and drama has a single purpose: to develop the creative, the spiritual, the imaginative life of the student, and to train and equip him to render a similar service among the people of his future parish.

The courses fall naturally under three heads: (1) Advanced Composition and Religious Journalism, (2) Biographies and Other Literature, and (3) Religious Drama. I shall outline briefly what I am endeavoring to accomplish in each.

## I. ADVANCED COMPOSITION AND RELIGIOUS JOURNALISM

These courses are designed to help students put words together more persuasively in their sermons, in articles for magazines and newspapers, and in all the manifold activities of their ministry.

One of the courses consists in project work in the art of composition of sermons and addresses. The other deals with analysis and criticism of current writings in the religious field, together with practice work in the preparation of articles for the leading religious periodicals and such secular journals as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, the *Forum*, the *Century*, the *Outlook*, etc.

In both of these courses the student does much writing. The professor assigns the topics, points out the general principles, and criticizes the products of the students' pens. And then more writing and more criticism, and so on until the whistle blows at the end of the term. No one can learn to write except by the actual practice of writing, day in and day out. The salient general principles are simple. First, *know the audience* to which you ad-

dress your article; next, *know the subject you intend to discuss*; and then, *put your words together so effectively that your audience will be persuaded concerning your subject*. Simple as these general principles may be they are more honored in the breach than in the observance. The first quarter's courses in these subjects have shown that some of the students have had good training in English composition, but more have not—or if they were exposed to it in college, it did not "take." But almost without exception the men have evidenced an eagerness to overcome their literary limitations. They have worked hard, and their progress has been most encouraging to a new and rather frightened professor. They are now contributing weekly to the *Maroon*, and a few of the products of the class in Journalism are appearing in religious and secular journals of national circulation and high standing, including the *Christian Century*, the *Congregationalist*, *Zion's Herald*, *Forest and Stream*, and others.

The need for such courses has long been recognized by all who have had anything to do with papers and articles submitted by theological students. Such papers may show a knowledge of a subject, but all too often they show a deplorable lack of understanding of how to make the subject clear and convincing, or even alive and interesting, to a given audience. It is my earnest hope that an increasing number of the men who take these courses will find in them some key to unlock their powers of expression, that they may learn to use clear and forceful diction—good Anglo-Saxon words with the tang of vitality in them—not school-ma'm English, or professional pulpit *patois*. I shall not be content unless they at least begin

to use the right word to convey their meaning—the “right word and not its second cousin.” And if they go further and awaken in themselves an appreciation of beauty of speech—if they substitute harmony of sound for jangle and noise—I shall be happy.

## 2. BIOGRAPHIES AND OTHER LITERATURE

There can be no denying the fact that most students enter their theological courses today with only a smattering of knowledge of English literature, and with only a bowing acquaintance with the lives and writings of the men and women who have peculiarly expressed the spiritual life of the past and present. They can never be great preachers or the most effective ministers of the gospel until they have acquired some understanding of God’s revelation in literature, and some knowledge of how to use it in their ministry.

Some fifty years ago, in his essay on “Books,” Ralph Waldo Emerson made a plea that some college establish a new chair to be occupied by a professor of books. More recently our own Dr. George A. Gordon, in his autobiography, gives his testimony to the value, for the preacher, of selective and systematic reading of great literature.

And here I made another discovery, one that has been with me throughout my life—that the stuff, the materials, of which the literary masterpieces are made are the thoughts and feelings of common men and women, their joys, sorrows, faith, despair, and the whole range of human experience; these the masterpieces take and express as the subjects of those experiences could not possibly hope to express. Genius gives the people back its own, its mind clarified and glorified, its heart exalted, inspired, and its life idealized, filled with beauty and power. . . .

For this is what reading does; it gives one a place in the best society of the world, really good society, not humbug society. This association with the greatest minds of the world, or with a selection of them, is on the intellectual side what we mean by the “communion of saints.”

In the course on biographies we shall strive not simply to acquire a knowledge of the lives of certain great men and women, but principally to *discover their sources of power*—their religion.

For the first year we shall make our selection of biographies from among the following:

- Francis Hirst, *Life and Letters of Thomas Jefferson*
- Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*
- Francis Darwin, *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*
- Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son*
- William H. Hudson, *Far Away and Long Ago*
- Arthur Cushman McGiffert, *Martin Luther*
- John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*
- John Morley, *William E. Gladstone*
- William Muir, *Life of Mahomet*
- Michael I. Pupin, *From Immigrant to Inventor*
- Theodore Roosevelt, *Letters to His Children*
- John Ruskin, *Præterita*
- Paul Sabatier, *Life of St. Francis*
- Walter Scott, *Journal*
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *Letters to His Family and Friends*
- Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*
- Lytton Strachey, *Queen Victoria*
- James Barrie, *Margaret Ogilvie*
- Mary Antin, *Promised Land*
- Carl Sandberg, *Abraham Lincoln*

In the literature of power our selection will include representative works from the writings of our great poets, novelists, dramatists, and essayists, *bearing in mind always the fact that this is not a college course in general literature, but an advanced course for men who are preparing themselves for preaching and teaching and writing on religious subjects.* Certainly every young preacher should be at home with Tennyson and Browning, Lowell and Emerson, Tolstoy and Dostoevski, Knut Hamsun and Henrik Ibsen, Shakespeare and Molière, Barrie and Galsworthy, Scott and Stevenson, Kipling and Conrad. These and a score of others have known and experienced the great religious currents of their day. They have summed up the faith and the hope and the

ideals of their generation and imprisoned them in words which will endure after all the material wealth, the buildings, and the railroads have crumbled into dust.

### 3. RELIGIOUS DRAMA

The object of the courses in religious drama is two-fold. First, they will endeavor to provide a discipline and development of the student's *emotional life*—including his imagination, his understanding, his sympathies—comparable to the discipline and development provided for his intellectual life by the study of theology, philosophy, exegesis, etc. The importance of this can hardly be over-stated, but the limits of this article preclude more than the mere mention of it here. Perhaps in a future issue I may be permitted to enlarge upon this ministry of drama to the spiritual life. If the courses succeed in it they will justify their existence whether or not a student is ever called upon to produce a religious play or pageant in his own parish. Second, they will endeavor to train the student to create, direct, and produce religious dramas. It need hardly be added that the type of dramas the student will be encouraged to produce will not be those designed for entertainment only, but those designed to *interpret the emotional and spiritual struggles of life and to show the challenge of Christianity to the individual and the community*. Let it be understood further that the scope of religious drama is by no means confined to the presentation of biblical material, or of pageants and spectacles whose main appeal is to the eye. In fact, *the greater part of our effort in this field shall be toward the production of strong modern plays with all the humor and imagination possible, dealing with the religious struggles of our own day, and endeavoring to reach the emotions and wills of the present generation with a message that is spiritually stimulating*.

One needs hardly remind the readers of the REGISTER that the modern drama was born in the church. But there may be some who think the seminary's venture into the field of teaching religious drama something of a fad. For the benefit of such it may be worth while to recall certain facts. If we had before us a map globe, we could spin it around and place our hands on certain portions of the earth's map where there has been (until recently at least) little or no drama. They would be those large areas covered by China, Japan, Egypt, and India. Why have they not developed drama? Because they are countries whose religions have been fatalistic. Fatalistic religions make no appeal to the human will. Whatever is, is as God willed it; there is nothing for man to do about it. Now the drama is essentially an art which portrays the struggles of men's wills. Where wills are not developed by the challenge of religion there is no drama. But spin the globe again. We place our hands this time on Greece, Italy, England, and America. These are countries which have developed drama. And they are countries whose religions have not been fatalistic but have challenged men's wills to right wrongs, to fight evil, to do battle for the Lord. We inherited our drama from England, England got hers from Italy, and Italy took hers from Greece. And away back in the days of the great republic in Greece we find religion and drama in the same cradle. The theaters in those days were controlled by the state and dealt with such subjects as woman's rights. Dramas were presented in the sacred places and in the sacred seasons of the year.

In the Middle Ages religion and drama both had a rebirth in England. And again they occupied the same cradle. The priests had something to say. They wanted to tell the gospel story to the people. The language of the church was Latin and but few laymen understood it. So the

priests began to dramatize it. They created Passion plays dealing with the life of Christ and acted them in pantomime in the church itself. Immediately the people began to understand. They wanted more. Miracle and mystery plays quickly followed. Then guilds of laymen were formed to act the plays on platforms outside the church. The actors put the platforms on wheels and rolled them out into the provinces and acted the plays for the benefit of those who had no opportunity to attend the great churches in the cities.

But now the drama began to move away from the church and from a sense of mission to the human spirit. It degenerated into a show business and then into a puppet show. It never became great until Shakespeare and his contemporaries came along with their vision of the struggling souls of men and lifted it again to a plane of influence and power in human affairs. It was Shakespeare who put in Hamlet's mouth that phrase, "the play's the thing," which is usually quoted entirely removed from its context. The full sentence is

The play's the thing  
*Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.*

The best dramas have always done just that; they have caught the *conscience* of the king—and of his people as well.

Today as in ancient Greece and medieval England we whose chief interest in life is religion—and especially a religion of power which challenges men's consciences and brings aid to them in their spiritual struggles—are turning quite naturally to the drama. For the essence of drama is struggle. The deepest struggles of our lives are religious. The drama, more than any other art, deals with the emotional and spiritual struggles of life, and the clash of human wills. It is not a matter of chance or fad, but a course of action deep rooted in historical precedent that in a day of revived emphasis in our religion upon the challenge to the will to right

wrongs, to take up the cross of Jesus and live life dangerously, we enlist the art of the drama to catch the conscience of our people. Dean Inge said sometime ago when discussing the new prophet which this generation needs,

When this new prophet comes I am disposed to think that he will choose to speak to his generation neither from the pulpit nor from the platform, nor from the printed page, but from the stage. A great dramatist might help us find our souls.

The extent to which drama, born in the church, is coming back to its own may be seen in such facts as these:

Churches throughout the country have been raising a growing demand for suitable plays for production in church auditoriums and parish-houses.

Summer schools of religious drama are being held in Auburn, New York, in the seminary buildings there; in Wellesley, Massachusetts; in Madison, Wisconsin; in Chicago; and at various other places.

The Federal Council of Churches, in response to repeated requests from various denominations, has set up a Committee on Religious Drama. This Committee has developed the summer school at Auburn, edited two volumes of selected plays, conducted prize contests to secure new and better plays, and has taken steps to bring about co-operation between the church and those who are working for better things in the theater.

This, then, is the justification which the Seminary has for establishing the courses in religious drama. It is no fad. Its roots go back to the beginnings of religion and drama. Its immediate warrant is in the need of our times for ministers whose emotions as well as intellects have been developed and disciplined until they can bring to their people a sympathetic understanding of the struggles of their souls and the challenge of Christianity to the conscience of mankind.

This is not only the ultimate justifica-

tion of courses in religious drama in the development of the minister, it is also the ultimate justification of the use of religious drama in a parish. For if a minister needs this sort of training for his own spiritual life, the men and women and young people of his parish need it as much or more. The great mass of us, whether we are ministers or business men, machinists or policemen, live our lives primarily on the emotional plane. The increasing mechanization and institutionalism of human life leave the creative impulses within us unsatisfied. Increasingly we feel that we are all cogs in a great machine, a machine that is liable to strip its gears and grind us to powder at any moment of great strain. The very preservation of sanity and balance and emo-

tional poise—the integration of our personalities—demands that these creative impulses within us, these thwarted emotions, these undisciplined desires, be trained, be directed, be saved from burning themselves out and consuming us in their fire. It is the function of religion to provide this salvation. Religion finds music and art and drama indispensable for that work of grace. Only yesterday a woman sat in my study and said, "I am glad I have had courses in drama. They have helped me to better understand my neighbors and the others with whom I rub elbows every day." It is wise counsel in the Bible which says, "With all thy getting get understanding." Religious drama is a means of increasing understanding among both ministers and laymen.

## *Horizons*

By CARL S. PATTON

The word "horizon" does not occur in the Bible. But the thing has been familiar since human eyes first opened on the world. When Abraham came out of Ur of the Chaldees, and his gaze wandered over the desert till it could go no farther; when Isaac went out into the field at evening to meditate, and dim shapes began to define themselves in the distance and the camels of Rebekah came toward him; when Amos stood on a knoll up in Tekoa, with nothing in any direction between him and the end of the world, they saw what we all see in the desert or from the deck of a ship. They saw the something that seems to come down like a wall out there at the end of things; they saw the place where the sky and the earth seem to come together; that boundary, like the circumference of a circle, that surrounds the visible universe. We call it the horizon.

In the city we forget about it. In Chicago there is no horizon. But the other day I got off the train out in Arizona early in the morning—air so clear you would think you could see to the end of the world—and there it was again, as distinct as I saw it from Diamond Head in the middle of the Pacific; that circle, that line, that wall, that has been there since human eyes were first opened, to stop the gaze of every eye that looks. It's the boundary, the end, so far as we can see; the abyss into which the sun goes, out of which rises the smoke of the steamer at sea or of the locomotive on the prairie, and beyond which whatever is, is out of our sight. That is the horizon.

Now every man has his own horizon around him. It's his boundary. It's where his sky meets the earth. It's the line beyond which he cannot see. It's the great circle—or maybe the small one—that