

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

The Mission of the Churches
to Higher Education

WAYNE SAFFEN

Calvin and Anabaptism

KARL H. WYNEKEN

Homiletics

Five-year Index

Book Review

Vol. XXXVI

January 1965

No. 1

The Mission of the Churches to Higher Education

WAYNE SAFFEN

It is perhaps significant that we consider the churches as having a mission to the university and college. This is an admission that on the secular campus the churches are outside looking in. They do not occupy the seat of power or even possess the persuasive ability to determine educational aims, philosophy, curriculum. To get religion classes taught at all involves a concession to religion on the part of most secular colleges and universities, a kind of recognition that there is still a sizable portion of our people who feel that religion is important — and almost as an afterthought — that religion, too, is a part of our cultural heritage of which no educated person ought to be ignorant. That is almost like saying that the Greek myths and heroes are also important in the nascent intellectual life of our Western civilization. Nobody therefore implies that Greek *religion* has much contemporary relevance. At best the myths serve to illuminate perennially existential situations. The Greek gods have been dead, and this for a long time. And the view that often prevails “top-side” at secular colleges and universities is that the Western God is dead also, leaving only the ethic of a Judaeo-Christian heritage to confront a Bonhoeffer “world come of age.”

The strategic and tactical facts in the case mean that the churches must chart their course successfully to invade the shores of higher education and to secure beachheads and establish centers of Christian influence in the dialog which makes

a university. However, at the outset, we should dispel all ideas of conspiracy which so often afflict us when the forces of change catch us unprepared. Atheists, communists, revolutionists, liberals, and modernists did not conspire successfully to infiltrate and capture the universities and colleges from the churches or from the conservatives. Nor do we propose a conspiracy to win them back by covert means. What we have in mind is the more theologically oriented notion of the Incarnation. For in the incarnation of our God in human existence we have the pattern for the churches' involvement in the university.

RELIGION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The Idea of a University

Without going into a laborious recapitulation of the history of the rise of the university and its development into the modern forms, we ought to take notice of the notable shift from religious to a frankly secular orientation and centering. The modern university began at Paris and elsewhere in the medieval period under auspices of the church. Theology was queen of the sciences. The aim of education was Augustinian — “Faith seeking understanding” — even if Aristotelianism was besting Platonism. Empiricism, and therefore the scientific method, was still to come. The theological discipline was the ultimate discipline, and theological faculties led academic processions as they still do, possibly in anachronistic fashion, at the old univer-

sities in Europe. That such ranking in processions no longer reflects the actual importance in the academic world is evident in the dominant role of the sciences in our own era. In this country higher education, before the land-grant colleges and universities, was almost entirely the investment of churches, often with the express purpose of developing their own clergy. The secularization of these colleges and universities within one century, or at the most two, is a familiar story. It is hard to think of Harvard, Yale, and the University of Chicago as religious institutions in our day. Oberlin college and city were both founded simultaneously to be truly religious communities. Now all that is left is a loose Congregationalist affiliation, a nondenominational school of theology, and a college department of religion. Still the religious coloration there, and even at the once Baptist-oriented University of Chicago the existence of the Rockefeller Chapel and Divinity School, reflects the founders' intention to make religion the center of education. But the center of higher education is not religion anywhere except in church colleges and seminaries. And even there we often see the process toward secularization going on. This process will be hastened where the church tries to exert theological control over academic freedom by forcing a premature separation of religion from education.

Any attempt to understand the mission of the churches to the university and higher education must try to understand what causes this wedge between church and college to enter and split the two. It is not enough to say that higher education has become secular. The question is why religion, specifically Christianity, has not been

able to maintain itself as the integrator of all knowledge. It is not only a question of church political control and the reaction against dogma, although the declaration of independence of thought against the thought control of the institutional church is a large chapter in the history of the Western world. Lest we forget, the Reformation was once part of that protest. Luther did as much as anyone to release the floodtide of nationalism and secularism against the dominance of the existing Western church.

However, the disturbing factor in the intellectual revolt against the Christian faith is the feeling that Christianity means closing the mind — narrowing the vision — while education liberates the mind. One of the professors at the University of Chicago in an orientation speech declared that the aim of education is the production of the *autonomous* mind. The autonomous mind requires the critical faculties which refuse to accept anything upon faith and is particularly hostile to any form of thought control, especially religious dogma. That this is a frank statement of the underlying philosophy of American higher education today should be acknowledged. If the churches' task is to *indoctrinate* and the university's job is to *liberate* the reason (the critical faculties) — that is, to dedoctrinate — then we have no small mental civil war on our hands. So as not to take the reactionary side and blame the influences of the enlightenment, science, and almost everything that constitutes subjects or tools for study in higher education, we ought to note that behind the deep distrust often evidenced by the church against secular education and vice versa, there is the common ground of *freedom*, which

strangely motivates both dogmatic and anti-dogmatic stances. For the doctrine that Christ has come to set us free is crucial to the whole scheme of redemption. Christ did not come to produce "know-nothings." St. Paul's disclaimer for worldly knowledge as a means of mission was not a preaching against reason or knowledge. It was rather a pre-Kantian critique of the limits of reason and the imperfection of epistemology apart from faith. The Christian community holds the same view today, regardless of how the limits of faith and reason are pressed or blended, or how sophisticated the apologists of faith become when talking to Schleiermacher's "cultured despisers of religion." It is the Christian insistence that when Christ sets a man free he is free in God's world where all things are his. If Luther insisted in his day that a Christian could be a soldier and a magistrate, perhaps we need today to insist that a Christian can be a scholar, philosopher, and scientist also.

This freedom is not achieved by closing off an area of secular or scientific inquiry as if these were "out of bounds" for faith. Nor can academic freedom and knowledge be maintained by the explicit secularists by denying or ignoring the religious dimension in knowledge and human experience. The anti-intellectuals among the Christians, including some clerics who proclaim their ignorance loudly, and the antireligionists among the educators both belong to the same class of bigots whom proponents of freedom on both sides abhor. If you wish for an aphorism, try this one: Those who oppose academic freedom display their own lack of freedom, the uneasy distrust of their own faith. Truth does not have to be imposed. The Spirit of truth leads us into it

and convinces us of it. Even to say, in the field of doctrine, that Christians are to distinguish between true and false prophets, implies not an objective standard of truth but a conviction that one who has the Spirit of truth can distinguish between truth and deception. This is another way of saying that we can trust God to lead and guide us also in our mental paths.

It is crucial that we arrive at some such understanding as this at the outset, or we will badly botch the job of being the mission of Christ to the university. Higher education, in spite of its enlightenment, has its large areas of darkness which can be illuminated only by Christ. But it is crucial that we, as the church fathers did, recognize that all light is God's light, wherever it shines. When the early church developed its Christology, we came to understand that the Logos who became incarnate was the Logos through whom all things were made and are sustained, the ordering principle or power of life and nature.

He who entered the fallen world to redeem it had never been absent from it. Therefore the whole Greek thought world could be captured by Christ, and its philosophic modes of thought could be used to express the Word of God in the words and language and thought forms of men, just as the Hebrew language implies a cultural history and a people's way of thinking. The task, then, is not to complain how things have changed since the 13th century and grieve for the dissolution of the medieval synthesis being completed in our century. The task is to see how the new knowledge, the new language, the new thought forms, the new psychologies and sciences can be appropriated for the language of faith. This is to say that theology has to

keep moving, as it always has, in order to present Christ not as an anachronism but as present Lord and Savior of all. The transfiguration of Christ is a prelude to the transfiguration of humanity in Him, as we all should have remembered in our reflection on the Transfiguration.

The University and the Universal

We said before that the integrating focus of education was no longer the Christian faith, nor is it even in our generation the idea of God. Even philosophy has all but abandoned the metaphysical quest and has occupied itself with linguistic analysis and logical positivism, engaged in what Will Durant contemptuously called the degeneracy of philosophy into epistemology.

What, then, unifies higher education if not even the theory of a θεός? For, as our modern educated world proclaims, "God is dead." The aim of a university is to be a miniature in the conceptualization and investigation of the whole cosmos. All of the disciplines — law, medicine, etc. — are fields of research as well as funds of collected knowledge. In all areas the frontiers of knowledge and expression are pushed, in the sciences and in the arts. However, the aim of education is not the Renaissance man of many talents, a universal man like Leonardo. It is a major achievement just to keep an educated person free from the straitjacket of his own specialized field and aware of other fields. The university achieves this to a small degree by throwing thinking people together and hoping that they interact. One of the aims of a university, then, is to bring the individual into an experience of being confronted with a multiverse of knowledge and ideas. In this the university seeks to reflect the true

nature of the world in which man finds himself — a highly complex interaction of associations and relationships, whether physical, mental, or personal. Simplification is untrue because it denies the *essential* complexity of everything. Thus any religion which attempts to be reductionist or simplifying is untrue because it denies the essential complexity. If it closes doors instead of opening vision, it is against the aim of education, which is to introduce the student into the realities of the world. Strangely, then, one of the unifying factors of a university is to reproduce and represent the complexity and multiversity of the world, the cosmos, the universe. This, plus the production of the autonomous man, serves as an integrating aim which religion may serve but not dominate.

Another unifying factor, on the practical level, is the production of highly trained technicians and manipulators of our technocrat society. This is a purely utilitarian aim and may well defeat the enlarging aims of education. It is not enough that a university produce thinking men and women. They must also be useful to society to fill the jobs being created in an increasingly complex society. If anything could kill the quest for truth which illuminates what it means to be a human being in humanity in a world of living organisms, it would be this demonic assassination of the spirit, which would make of even our most highly trained scientists mere functionaries in a universal state. The clearest evidence at hand is that of the nuclear scientists who have rubbed the genie out of Aladdin's lamp and are set to the task by the state to produce more genies for the purposes of war. "Pure science" yields to practical results that raise serious moral questions the

scientists are unprepared to answer. The first conference at the University of Chicago's new Center for Continuing Education brought together scientists and theologians from around the world under the auspices of the university's Division of Nuclear Medicine and the Divinity School to discuss "Radiation and Moral Ethics." The university obviously needs a climate of freedom from control by church or state and freedom from the dogmas of both if it is to find a solution to a problem. Those who think that Christians have only answers and no problems are either living in another world or in another century if indeed such a world ever existed in any other century.

Yet while we emphasize the pure, non-utilitarian kinds of inquiries—pure science, pure doctrine, etc.—we must reckon also with the valid place of specialization and utility in education. Alfred North Whitehead—one of the few respected metaphysicians of our times, a mathematician and scientist, a churchman operating out of Anglicanism, a Deweyite (or at least an empiricist in education)—who has not been without religious influence, refuses to be caught in the merely liberal arts aspect of higher education. In a remarkable series of essays, *The Aims of Education*, he sets forth what the modern university and college is or should be about at its best.

Culture is activity of thought and receptiveness to beauty and humane feeling. Scraps of information have nothing to do with it. A merely well-informed man is the most useless bore on God's earth. What we should aim at producing is men who possess both culture and expert knowledge in some special direction. Their expert knowledge will give them the ground

to start from, and their culture will lead them as deep as philosophy and as high as art. We have to remember that the valuable intellectual development is self-development, and that it mostly takes place between the ages of 16 and 30. As to training, the most important part is given by mothers before the age of 12 . . . (P. 13)

Pedants sneer at an education which is useful. But if education is not useful, what is it? Is it a talent to be hidden away in a napkin? Of course education should be useful, whatever your aim in life. It was useful to St. Augustine, and it was useful to Napoleon. It is useful because understanding is useful. . . . (P. 14)

Education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge . . . (p. 16). There is only one subject matter for education, and that is life in all its manifestations. . . . (P. 18)

You cannot evade quantity. You may fly to poetry and to music, and number will face you in your rhythms and your octaves. Elegant intellects which despise the theory of quantity are but half developed. To talk sense is to talk quantities. You cannot put life into any schedule of general education unless you succeed in exhibiting its relation to some essential characteristic of all intelligent or emotional perception. . . . (P. 20)

The subjects pursued for the sake of a general education are special subjects specially studied. On the other hand, one of the ways of encouraging general mental activities is to foster a special devotion. You may not divide the seamless coat of learning. What education has to impart is an intimate sense for the power of ideas, for the beauty of ideas, for the structure of ideas, together with a particular body of knowledge which has peculiar reference to the life of the being possessing it. . . . The appreciation of the structure of ideas

is that side of a cultured mind which can grow only under the influence of a special study. I mean that eye for the whole chess-board, for the bearing of one set of ideas on another.

Finally, there should grow the most austere of all mental qualities: I mean the sense for style. It is an aesthetic sense, based on admiration for the direct attainment of a foreseen end, simply and without waste. Style in art, style in literature, style in logic, style in practical execution have fundamentally the same aesthetic qualities, namely, attainment and restraint. . . . Style is always the product of specialist study, the peculiar contribution of specialism to culture.

When one considers in its length and in its breadth the importance of this question of the education of a nation's young, the broken lives, the defeated hopes, the national failures, which result from the frivolous inertia with which it is treated, it is difficult to restrain within oneself a savage rage. In the conditions of the modern life the rule is absolute that a race which does not value trained intelligence is doomed. Not all your heroism, not all your social charm, not all your wit, not all your victories on land or at sea, can move back the finger of fate. Today we maintain ourselves. Tomorrow science will have moved forward yet one more step, and there will be no appeal from the judgment which will then be pronounced upon the uneducated. We can be content with no less than the old summary of the educational ideal which has been correct at any time from the dawn of our civilization—the essence of education is that it is religious.

Pray, what is religious education?

A religious education is an education which inculcates duty and reverence. Duty arises from our potential control over the course of events. Whereas attainable

knowledge could have changed the issue, ignorance has the guilt of vice. And the foundation of reverence is this perception, that the present holds within itself the complete sum of existence, backwards, and forwards, that whole amplitude of time, which is eternity. . . . (Pp. 25, 26)

I have chosen this long series of excerpts from a narrow source, rather than scattering a number of quotations throughout the paper, to focus upon a series of remarkable statements of one man who sought an integrated view of what modern education is about. That Whitehead said this in 1929 does not obviate its current value.

For if we speak about "The Mission of the Churches to Higher Education," we must define our terms. We must at least find out what colleges and universities are before we go in like Don Quixote, rather than St. George, to tilt at windmills instead of slaying dragons. We have to know what higher education is after, what the aims are. Implicit in the idea of a university is the intention to present a conceptualization of the universe. Yet in our day complexity has produced a multiversity of specialized studies in colleges, with little successful interchange. The problem, we say, is semantic, a problem in communication. So we set up another department—of semantics! Educators of all stripes are concerned about the aims of education, and the conflict becomes clear when it comes to selecting a new chancellor of a university. Shall he be a Nobel scientist, an educator, a business man, a retired general, a theologian or churchman?

Two Cultures

What Whitehead saw, with remarkable foresight, was the problem elucidated by C. P. Snow in his discovery of the *two cul-*

tures existing side by side in near independence: the sciences and the humanities. This cultural split is reproduced in every major university.

The churches must understand this split if they are to be relevant to the major concerns of today. It is not enough to address ourselves to the hermeneutics of Gen. 1—3, as if our only problem were to harmonize an inspired account of the genesis of all things with prevailing scientific notions and myths. The whole doctrine of creation and the whole doctrine of man are at stake. Automation is as much a part of the problem as are amino acids.

The religionists protest against the desacralizing of the universe, and the humanists protest against the dehumanization of man. Erich Fromm asks: May man prevail? Bernard Iddings Bell was one of the first to talk about "crowd culture." Ortega y Gasset noted the "revolt of the masses." A major book on cybernetics bore the subtitle "*The Human Use of Human Beings*." And even the *American Weekly*, a Sunday supplement, complained about the "Brain Watchers," attacking the mass psychological testing which handles people on a psychological assembly line basis, complete with arbitrary rejections. (Feb. 3, 1963)

Many have suggested that the basic role of the church in our society is to take the side of the humanities against the sciences, since what is at stake is the future of man and human values. This goes considerably beyond the epistemological question in which the scientific method is set against the method of faith as a way of knowing. That becomes almost a parlor exercise, a mental game. For to move from the epistemological questions to the value questions brings us to the sphere of the ultimate

questions of the meaning of human existence. To throw the weight of the empirical church behind the humanists in the culture battle of our times is to make a rather far-reaching decision.

It is one which we should not make too quickly, for to do so would be to restrict the area in which the churches find themselves competent to speak. Here the "Two Kingdoms" view of Luther would have near fatal results and render inoperative the First Article of the Creed, in which we confess that we believe in the Maker of heaven and earth. It would finally say that Christianity can only speak to the human conditions on this planet. It would ascribe to the sciences an autonomy of their own, free from the critical judgment of the Christian community, an autonomy as fatal in consequence as leaving it to Hitler to rule Germany or to Mississippi senators to integrate Dixie.

The churches must seek to bridge the "two cultures," if only in the role of reconciler. Here we ought to become acquainted with the efforts of theologians like Karl Heim and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and with much less profound efforts like those of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to relate science and the Christian faith. We do not need to agree with the conclusions to appreciate the effort. The scientist or theologian who says that there is no conflict between science and religion because each operates in its own autonomous sphere has evaded the problem by the means of a mental compartmentalization. The church that will settle for this has lost its doctrine of creation and of the presence of God throughout His whole creation. Yet we cannot cheat at the game and seize upon the principle of indeterminacy in nuclear science

to poke fun at the "sacred cow" of science. Among other things, radiation is real.

What I am really saying is that campus pastors, if they are to address themselves in a really vital mission to higher education, must be informed about the current state of educational philosophies, the aims of education, the cultural history of at least our Western world, the direction of science and the humanities, the role of philosophy. Not only informed, but concerned. We have finally to love the university and believe that it is our calling as human beings to "love the Lord with all our minds also." It is not enough that we keep up on the latest statistics of premarital sex play among coeds, as if we were merely the morals watchers of society. To love the university is not to forgo criticism. It is to sharpen it. But to criticize without love is, as always, to bang on a tin pan with a table-spoon. And to criticize without getting our facts straight is only to give fresh evidence to the already widespread view that Christianity does not know what it is talking about in the modern world.

If I may summarize the first part of this paper, then,

1. The aims of education in our times seem to be:
 - a. To produce the autonomous, critical mind.
 - b. To make the individual aware of the complexity and multiversity of life, where universality is hard to formulate.
 - c. To train people as useful contributors in society by means of specialized studies.
2. The emergence of the "Two Cultures" presents the Christian community

with a choice to be itself universal or partial.

3. And finally, and practically, a campus pastor must understand and love higher education. At his local level he has to consider the kind of university or college in which he is ministering and adapt his ministry to its major concerns. In many instances this may mean that Jacques Barzun's "house of intellect" is not nearly so large at the local junior college or technical college as it is at Columbia University or Reed College. Among other things, the campus pastor may find himself *raising* the issues of faith, the questions of doubt, before applying the church's answers too readily.

THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES

If we try to understand what a university or a college is, what higher education is all about, what the aims of education are, then it is equally crucial that we try to understand what "church" means. As it happens to be the major theological question of our ecumenical century, it should not be surprising to see it raised at the level of higher education.

Since we tend to think of the church in terms of our own tradition, we might as well ask what The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is doing at the universities and colleges. Why are we there? The most obvious answer is that our young people are there, and our pastoral concern follows them. Indeed, our aims in campus work as a Synod have been exceedingly simple and progressive: (1) Conservation, (2) Reclamation, (3) Mission, (4) Training in Churchmanship.

Now, in terms of self-interest, these are

eminently practical and even worthwhile goals. But what have they to do with the aims of education? What have they to do with the interaction of Christian thought and departments of knowledge? These are simple parochial goals transferred to the "field" of higher education. Each of them implies a losing battle against forces which do not yield to parish patterns. Gamma Delta cannot simply be a senior Walther League. College is not high school. A campus is not a suburban neighborhood.

To aim to *conserve* students, the very ones we trained possibly in our own elementary schools from infancy up into ways from which they were not to depart, is an admission that we are in fact losing students who go away to college and university. If we see the university as demonic in this respect, as a "godless" institution that weans the faithful away from kith, kin, and kirk, then we fail to see the intellectual dimensions of faith or the religious nature of the intellectual enterprise. Even to conserve the student means to be in some way a part of the university framework and to have a student or student-related parish that is not the same as the church back home. To provide shelter for the student fearful of losing his faith because of the intellectual encounter is only to postpone the encounter or to atrophy the growth of a mental life. Students can be conserved only if they discover that it is not intellectually reprehensible to be a Christian and that a vital community of faith exists of which he may be a part. Crucial in this is the necessity of valuing the Christian student's intellectual freedom and of recognizing with St. Augustine that curiosity—even a kind of probing doubt—is essentially a religious activity, stirred

by and directed toward God. For St. Augustine to ask is a religious act.

To *reclaim* students means that the church on the campus has to have something better to offer than that from which the student has already severed himself. That means to take seriously the criticisms of students against the church and to recognize that they are not all unfounded, nor are they simply excuses. It means also that the campus pastor becomes aware of the need for students to have a period of non-involvement where they can fight through the battles of faith and search themselves. In reclaiming students it is often necessary to develop the fine art of letting them alone but letting them know that their church is present and the pastor is available if they wish to see him. Among other things, we should not get too nervous about the statistics of reclamation. Straying sheep are never far from the Shepherd's eye, and there is a persistency of growth in the Word which is planted in the heart. In other words, it is wholesome for the pastor and campus church not to have to justify their ministries by means of statistics. Many get reclaimed officially long after college because of a religious influence that was exerted upon them during college but that was not evident in their response at the time. For the campus church to be a *mission* to the university is legitimate, but not at the expense of the educational goals. Students do not come to get converted but to learn. At the University of Chicago the administration has taken a rather strict stance and policy against the religious exploitation of our foreign and international students. I confess that I must agree with the administration, if only because I have heard of the disgusted reaction

against overeager Christians who browbeat fellow students with Bible passages. Nobody ever tabulates the statistics or shows the pictures in denominational magazines of those students who reject the hard sell of campus fanatics. The Lutheran understanding of conversion has little in common with the Billy Graham "decision for Christ." Rather we have a theology of the Word and believe that the Holy Spirit works the conversion in the heart. The best mission is the witnessing community of Christian students who bear witness by the influence of Christ evident in their individual and corporate lives. These can become interested in international students, not just as prospects for Christianity but for their own sakes, on purely humanistic lines, if you please. Don't worry about the religious confrontation. You couldn't abolish religious discussion on campus if you tried. But it makes a difference if the "prospect" does not have to feel that we are interested more in our statistics than in what happens to him. To take the quietly intense and purposeful but outwardly relaxed attitude toward missions on the campus is another way of stating the confidence of faith, the trust in the Spirit, and the reality of the religious community with its worship in Word and Sacrament.

Training in churchmanship is a more realistic goal, but not an easy one. The difficulty here is that involving the student too much in the local parish subverts his main goal of academic education. His vocation at this time in his life is to be a student, not to maintain churchly organizations. He may serve God better by reading a book or by working late in a laboratory than by coming to a student discussion. Now, this should not be inverted to say

that he should not get a higher Christian education in his total educational process. If he is to get involved, it should not be on the basis of being merely active. The activity itself should be a training in churchmanship, so that he may serve also in the congregation and perhaps on larger church boards later on in life. Training in churchmanship means training in worship, Bible, theology, ethics, church organization. It means also the developed consciousness of what it means to serve God in one's daily vocation as the "salt of the earth."

To these four I suggest that we should now add a fifth: *dialog*. We are at the stage where we should initiate dialog among the campus Christian and religious groups. This means reappropriating our Jewish heritage and talking also with our separated Roman Catholic brethren as well as building bridges to our separated Protestant brethren. It means that, while retaining synodical and Lutheran identity, we gain the ecumenical vision, and further than that, begin to reckon with the encounter of the world's major religions as well as the secular variants of religion: humanism and scientism. And lastly, it means that the Christian community, if not the integrator of all knowledge, can at least be the reconciler of disciples. We ought to be among those who seek to overcome alienation, separation, enmity, and the plain breakdown of communications.

THE MISSION

If we equate the mission of the churches with evangelism, we might try on this definition of evangelism for size:

Evangelism is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as Savior

from the guilt and power of sin, to serve Him as Lord in the fellowship of the Church and to follow Him in the vocation of the common life. (This is a definition appropriated by the National Council of Churches, and is available on a bulletin cover — 8018R — from Peak Publications in Colorado Springs, Colo.)

In outlining at this point the shape of the mission of the churches to higher education, I am indebted in part to Visser 't Hooft in his book *The Pressure of Our Common Calling*.

Be the Church

In Christendom "the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and keeps us with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." This we Lutherans believe. It is also *through* the empirical church in its proclamation, worship, sacrament, fellowship, and service that this happens. The first thing that happens on a campus, then, is that from among the students the Holy Spirit calls and gathers a part of "Christendom" so that it can be enlightened and sustained and returned to the world in the double mission of witness and service. "To be the church" means to be the church in an authentic way, with all that implies for acceptance or rejection of accustomed parish patterns. This necessarily means raising critical questions about the kind of life the empirical church is leading in our society, whether it is the holy community or the private club of like-minded people, whether it is ingrown or outgoing. It means also that we recognize that at any campus the whole body of Christians present in a sense constitutes the church in that place. This has implications for our student and nonstudent parochial life, without destroying the necessary and justifiable bases for separate parish life. It means that besides being answerable to our

own District and synodical officials, we are also in some way answerable to the Latin hierarchy and the presbyteries and the Methodist superintendents and all the other ecclesiastical authorities in our country as to how we treat their people. For us "to be the church" means to recognize that we are the body of Christ as we are gathered about Word and Sacrament but that individually and through our congregations we are also members of the totality of Christendom, which constitutes the body of Christ on earth. "To be the church" means that it is the whole congregation which is to serve. This insight is both valid and necessary so that we do not confuse our goals. Campus pastors are not one-man armies who invade the campuses to bring back captives for Christ. It is the church of students and the rest of the faithful who are to bring others into our common life. And we are to train parishioners in this task. This should answer the question about the conflict which often arises in "town-gown" situations between members of the congregation and the college there. If they do not know it yet, such congregations should be instructed by their pastors that they exist as a mission to a total community. This includes colleges, universities, hospitals, prisons, sanatoria, all classes and segments of the local society, all races and colors, convalescent homes, and perhaps even factories and industries, as well as military establishments. The congregation did not call the pastor to serve only them but to lead them in service to others. What conscientious pastor is there today who does not spend half of his meager time for the pastoral ministry in ministering to people who are not of his parish or who may not even be likely to become members?

1. LATREIA (Λατρεία), WORSHIP

The church achieves a new realization whenever a congregation gathers about Word and Sacrament. This implies a worshipping congregation, worshipping in a particular way, the liturgical way. It means the Sacrament of the Altar every Sunday morning as the chief service of the day. It means that proclamation of the Gospel and celebration of the presence of Christ's body and blood are not separated, as if the faithful of the church must be condemned to celebrate the weekly Easter three times a month as mere catechumens, denied the sacrament. It means further training of the people in the fine art of public worship, to understand the corporate nature of worship, and to recognize the signs and symbols which evoke faith as well as betoken it. It means the participation of the people in the fullest possible way in the Sunday services. It means the recovery and use of our liturgical heritage, the employment of the finest possible church music and art, the employment of all the talents of the people and the riches of our culture, historic and contemporary, in the celebration of our most holy religion, that we may worship God in the beauty of holiness. It means the proclamation of the Gospel, not merely doctrinal instruction. To the central service of the Holy Eucharist we may add as many teaching offices and experiment in as many worship patterns as our people can learn to accept. But centrally it means the definition in practice in knowing worship as the response of the faithful in all of life to our gracious God. It means learning by doing, and not just by talking about what the church once did or does elsewhere. It means, if you please, the liturgical renewal

of the church from within the church at the church's own center of its corporate life: Gospel and Sacrament. It means the training of the members of the priestly college, that is, the new Israel, to exercise their priesthood not only in their households and private devotions but also in the public services of the church.

2. KOINONIA (Κοινωνία), FELLOWSHIP

The Holy Communion should be grasped in all the dimensions with which the New Testament word *κοινωνία* is associated: communion, fellowship, participation, sharing, contributions. Togetherness and groupness is characteristic of student life, as lonely as student life can be. The church on the campus, however, is also the church in its own specific kind of *κοινωνία*. It is easy to degenerate into mere discussion groups and fun groups. While discussion and joy are necessary manifestations of the Eucharistic life of *κοινωνία*, they do not *constitute* the communion and community we have with one another in Christ. We belong to one another because we belong to Christ. This understanding must be planted deep in the consciousness of every parishioner. The student at college or university belongs to a religious community, not just to a student activity. A student congregation may look and act a bit differently from other parochial patterns, but it is no less a congregation of the faithful. Christian *κοινωνία* must be open-minded and inviting to the non-Christian or fellow Christian of another persuasion or background. We do not just accept Christ as Christians. We are also incorporated in His church, a living fellowship of believers with whom we share a holy communion.

3. MARTYRIA (Μαρτυρία), WITNESS

One doubts that this is any longer the collegiate generation that "plays it cool" and remains detached from the possibility of martyrdom. It is true that perceptive students in our society recognize that security and conformity are the goals of a safe existence. Nobody sets out to be a martyr. And yet there are students who have risked contemporary martyrdom, for example, in the Southern sit-ins as a social protest against the injustices in our society. Students today will even risk martyrdom if the stakes are high enough and the challenge is forthright. That the churches today have not exhibited martyrs in convincing numbers in our society can be as much an indictment of the accommodation of the churches to prevailing cultural, social, and economic patterns as it is on the campus an indictment of the student who merely has learned that, no matter what the preachers and idealists say, everybody really plays it safe—churches included. Yet Christ's church is always a martyr church, a witnessing church, or it has lost its prophetic cutting edge, and the proclamation of the Gospel becomes merely the reiterating of stale news which nobody really takes seriously. Must communism come to America to make martyrs of us? Or can we not see the martyrdom of those caught in the vises of modern existence in every vocation? To live in the world as a Christian means to be caught in the conflict of faith and culture, no matter where that culture is, even in what used to be called a Christian country.

Who are the really penetrating voices of our times? Probably Salinger, Camus, Orwell, Ferlinghetti, William Golding, T. S. Eliot, Auden, Kerouac, Ayn Rand, even

Ezra Pound, Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, and Henry Miller, even Hugh Hefner. Collegians today know more about what is in the latest issue of *Playboy* than what is in the *Lutheran Witness*. And the Playmate of the Month hangs on more walls than an ikon of our Lord. It can be argued that there is something essentially honest about the affirmation of sex in our revived paganism, a protest against the Puritanism which repressed the sexual area of life for a long time but is unable to stem the flood now that the dam of conventional morality has been broken. It is a witness against a merely moralistic kind of hypocrisy, cant, and denigration of the body. What I mean to point out is that there are still areas of affirmation among students today which defy social custom and restraint, a kind of pagan martyrdom if you will. The response of mere moralism at this point would very likely be the conditioned reflex of the neo-Stoicism of our time, not the insight that Jesus had with reference to the sinners of His day, that beneath the sexual flaunting of society and religion by some of them there lay a deep demand to be taken seriously as human beings. Unlike the Pharisees, our Lord healed these people. And this was one of the reasons why He was murdered. Christians who are concerned with the lost generations run parallel risks. It is not required of Christian martyrs, however, that they imitate the sinners or ignore and condone their sins. It is required that they bring the healing of forgiveness and restoration. If we can convince collegians that we are really interested in saving the lost instead of creating new lost generations by merely moralizing, all the idealism will not be absorbed by the Peace Corps.

4. DIAKONIA (Διακονία), SERVICE

Visser 't Hooft says that if we speak of the universal priesthood of believers, we should also speak of the universal deaconhood of believers. Perhaps this is the most serious lack in conventional church life today. We have become so concerned with becoming a success in society that we have abandoned the social ministries except as things for agencies to do. Perhaps one of the most telling sermons on this subject was given by Helmut Thielicke in his assessment that the rich man in the parable of Dives and Lazarus is within each of us. (*The Waiting Father*, pp. 44—45)

What we need to do is to develop an awareness of the larger social issues which can be met only on the plane of political activity and social action and the peculiar diakonal service in which each Christian can engage who will involve himself with the social misery of the Lazarus who lies not too far from his door. Luther reiterates the point that Jesus makes of his own ministry and our discipleship: it is a service to others. The Sunday morning offering, too often simply a collection, will not suffice. That can only gather up and represent the whole life of self-giving throughout the week. Christians are in the world to serve. Students must be taught and exhorted to love as they have been loved by God, to serve as they have been served, to give as they have been given. If you wish to stir guilty feelings among students which cover real sins and insecurities, challenge them at the point of their pride: their talents, the gifts they have, and the opportunities they have for service. If one of Whitehead's aims of education is social utility for one's developed powers and skills, the goal for Christian education is the service

of God in the world. Διακονία and λειτουργία are linked by St. Paul in 2 Cor. 9:11, 12 in connection with an offering being gathered, a fund-raising campaign, if you will, for relief of the saints at Jerusalem suffering from a nationwide famine and economic depression.

You will be enriched in every way for great generosity, which through us will produce thanksgiving [εὐχαριστία] to God. For the rendering [διακονία] of this service [λειτουργία] not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings [εὐχαριστία] to God.

You will note the close connection of διακονία, λειτουργία, and εὐχαριστία, whether you take this word in its broad sense of "giving of thanks" or in the narrow technical meaning of the Eucharist. The proper worship of God is celebrated on Sunday by the servants of God in the liturgy of thanksgiving, a transfiguration of the liturgy of service undertaken by Christians in their daily life in society. This is the merger of the cult and the ethic, the peaceful coexistence, nay, cooperation of the priest and the prophet in the service of Him whom the early liturgies, such as that ascribed to Hippolytus, were wont to describe as the "Servant of God."

CONCLUSION

In listing these four characteristic activities of the church, also in the prosecution of its ministry to higher education, we made no mention at all of the intellectual mission or mission to intellectuals. This is because the intellectual is involved in every area: λατρεία, κοινωνία, μαρτυρία, διακονία. How can you worship God or hear His Word without the mind also and all the implications this has for

faith and reason? How can collegians be in any other kind of fellowship than that which also shares their intellectual concerns? How can Christians bear witness without making some sort of sense? How can they serve if they are not aware of the implications and dimensions of the service of God in contemporary social situations?

We could learn much from Alexander Miller's analysis of the relation between the church community and the university community in his *Faith and Learning*. If through our ministry and mission in the midst of an academic community our community of faith comes to manifest the authentic presence of God among men by concentrating on "being the church" for

the sake of the world of which the university is a part, the mission will not be misinterpreted as mere denominational imperialism or ecclesiastical paternalism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Miller, Alexander. *Faith and Learning*. New York: Association Press, 1960.
- Thielicke, Helmut. *The Waiting Father*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959.
- 't Hooft, Visser. *The Pressure of Our Common Calling*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1959.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *The Aims of Education*. New York: New American Library, 1949. (Originally published by Macmillan Company, 1929.)
- Chicago, Ill.