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Church, State and the Will of God

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The Year the Revival Passed Crest

An Editorial

The Y.M.C.A. on the Campus

William A. Overholt

of Christian students. The quadrennial National Student Assembly is always a landmark in clarifying the ways in which a generation of Christian students will respond to the Christian challenge for their time. More than a thousand students are gathering at the University of Illinois during the Christmas vacation this year for a National Student Assembly. Summer leadership schools, study booklets which have attracted wide attention and the publication of the *Intercollegian* magazine are a few of the other aspects of the intercollegiate program.

However, the student Y today finds itself severely restricted in resources. Almost all the Y.M.C.A.s across the country have chosen to participate in community chests and so no longer carry on free-ranging solicitation of funds. For various reasons, the campus Ys do not have the leverage in community financing that most city associations do. On the other hand, city Ys are increasingly supporting work in colleges in their own communities.

The student Y.M.C.A. is further restricted by the absence of a common passion for witness on the campus to the wholeness of God's people. Factionalism among Christian campus groups hampers all. This impasse in Protestant Christianity urgently calls for a concerted attack by all concerned for the church's witness in higher education. Here and there across

the nation significant attempts to coordinate ecumenically the work of separate Christian campus groups are being made: for instance, in the Christian associations at Macalester College in Minnesota, at the University of Pennsylvania, at Penn State and at Boston University; in the Christian fellowship at Bowling Green State University in Ohio; and in the recently organized college church at Claremont, California. Such instances need to be multiplied.

The ecumenical movement in this country could be substantially extended if procedures to delegate responsibility for given areas of work could be formulated whereby interchurch councils could use the resources of nondenominational organizations. The way the World Council of Churches recognizes and works with the World Alliance of Y.M.C.A.s and the World's Y.W.C.A. furnishes a desirable pattern.

Pluralistic, factional ministries, vigorously pursuing their own objectives, do not properly represent the body of Christ in the academic community any more than they do in society at large. In the academic community the inconsistency is inescapable. The proper representation of the chosen of God in their worship toward him and the proper training of laymen and future clergy for the work of Christ in the world in this revolutionary age demand a coordinated mission and witness in our colleges and universities.

A Letter from Karl Barth

★ DEAR EDITOR: Your friendly letter of July 23—for which I thank you heartily—caused me real embarrassment. I opened it expecting that it would be an invitation to take part in a third series, to be published in 1958, on the theme "How My Mind Has Changed"; and to this I would (perhaps!) have contributed with pleasure, as I did to the 1938 and 1948 series. But it appears that you want something altogether different for 1958, namely a preview of the future—a statement of what tasks and problems I would set myself if, in the light of my past experience, I were now beginning my work as theological teacher and writer. I gather from your letter that you have sent the same invitation to other well known theologians of my generation, and that you intend to publish our assembled remarks on this theme in book form, for the benefit of today's younger theologians.

What will these contemporaries of mine have to say to this invitation and this plan? I cannot speak for them. But I must say that for my own part this project of yours leaves me nonplused, and so, however gladly I would serve you, I cannot agree to contribute to it.

To the best of my memory, at no stage in my theological career did I ever plan more than the immediate next steps. And these next steps grew inevitably out of the steps I had already taken, and out of my impressions of the needs and possibilities latent in

every new day and every new situation. As I see it now, my career has been a "succession of present moments." I found myself—the man I had become up to that time, equipped with whatever knowledge I fancied I had acquired—always set suddenly before some biblical or historical or academic complex, some theme thrust upon me from outside, some immediate problem (for example a political one); in short, some new thing that I did not look for but that claimed me. Then I tried to stand up to this new thing as best I could. That was difficult enough, and so I never could think about tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. I have hardly ever had or carried out anything in the nature of a program. Rather my thinking and writing and speaking issued from my encounters with people, events and conditions that flowed toward me with their questions and riddles. I discovered them—at first, the liberalism and socialism of the beginning of the century; or later, the text of the letter to the Romans; or still later, the theological tradition of the ancient and the Reformed church; or the German situation after 1933 or the Swiss situation after 1939. I discovered them; which is to say, these people, events, conditions burst upon me; they spoke to me, engaged my interest or compelled me to say something about them. I never planned to be, do or say this or that; I was, did or said this or that as the time for it came.

That is the way it has been with me—for twenty-five years now, and especially in working out the *Church Dogmatics*: from one semester to another, from one week to another. So with my other books, lectures, sermons. They are, as it were, trees of all kinds, big and little, that sprang up, grew and spread before me. Their existence did not depend on me; rather I had to watch over their development with all my attention. Or I might say that I feel like a man in a boat that I must row and steer diligently; but it swims in a stream I do not control. It glides along between ever new and often totally strange shores, carrying me toward the goals set for me, goals that I see and choose only when I approach them.

Whether God in the inscrutable wisdom of his providence destined and created me to be so unsystematic a theologian, or whether in my human confusion I have made myself such, who shall say? But one thing is sure: if you, dear sir, are of the opinion that (as you say in your letter) I have helped to bring about today's theological situation and continue to shape it, then you must reckon with the fact that this is the manner in which I have lived as a theologian up to this day, this the manner in which I have made my contribution to contemporary theology. I prayed for my daily bread, received it and ate it, and let the next day take care of itself. I do not think that at this time of life I shall change my ways. And I do not think that anyone can expect of me more than I can accomplish in my own way during the years yet left me.

And now you will surely understand and not take it amiss that I cannot play along in the "symphony of the future" you plan—with the first nor the second violins, with the flutes nor the double basses, nor as the able man who presides over the great kettle drum. Why not? Certainly not because the future of theology in general (and so also of my own theology) does not interest me; otherwise I would not continue working, as I would like to do so long as time and strength are granted me. But because now as in the past the present makes such claims on me that I can indulge in picturing the future only in passing dreams if at all—and because as concerns the future itself (if I did not prefer to remain silent) I should have something serious to say only when that future had become the present.

Respectfully and expectantly I look forward to what the other members of the company of elders you have called on will spread out before us in the way of prognoses, programs and prospectuses. And I should rejoice if their comments proved of benefit to the young people who are coming into the field today. But I would have to be a different person, with a different way of life, if I were to produce even thirty—not to speak of 3,000!—sensible and useful words in this matter. All that I can really contribute to your enterprise is three English words—unoriginal and banal but responsibly uttered: Wait and see!

With kindest regards and greetings,

KARL BARTH.

Religion and Courage

ADLAI E. STEVENSON

Recently Adlai E. Stevenson spoke at the dedication service for the new building of the Unitarian Church of Evanston, Illinois. Following are some excerpts from his address.

† I HAVE thought a little, but I am sorry to say not for long, about the importance of ministers, of all clergymen. As a boy, I used to think about their spiritual importance, about their importance as educators. But a new dimension has been disclosed in recent years, one that we sometimes overlook. In this era of conformity, it has often been the ministers who like the prophets of old have spoken out for the values of democracy. In earlier, quieter times it was the small-town newspaper editor, then the college professor. But latterly it seems to be the rabbi, the minister, the priest who has had courage to withstand the pressures of these times and to speak his piece with boldness and with persistence on behalf of the good, the right and the just.

Organized religion has made another contribution that has become more conspicuous of late. It is the power of religion—the influence of organized religious bodies of one kind or another and of some religious individuals—that has time and again been responsible for bringing the statesmen of the world to the conference table. I wonder if we would be as far along as we are today in the direction of nuclear controls by adequate inspection, banning testing and so on if it were not for what the Unitarians have done, what the Quakers have done, what the profoundly impressive utterances of Albert Schweitzer have done. This is another role, another dimension.

All these things seem to suggest that it is the spiritual leaders among us who are more and more assuming a role of leadership in our life and who are indispensable to the progress of a civilized society.

In a time of such infinite pressure from so many directions toward conformity, toward fear, toward timidity, I think it is a wonderful thing to see churches and synagogues springing up as they are all over this country, and abroad. I hope the ministers of this country will always speak out their undying hostility to ignorance, to war, to the afflictions of contemporary society. . . .

I would like to congratulate this congregation on the way you have encouraged your distinguished minister, Dr. Homer Jack, to roam around the world and to reflect here some of the aspirations of the people he has met, especially the newly emerging peoples of Asia and Africa. How he has expressed the aspirations of the underdeveloped people to the overdeveloped suburbs of Chicago! This is a wholesome thing in a world that is shriveling hour by hour. The leaders of thought, who are the conduits of the most precious values of democracy, should know more intimately our neighbors who are drawing closer the world around.