

**UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY. THE
SEMINARY: ITS SPIRIT AND AIMS.
ADDRESSES GIVEN AT
THE ANNUAL DINNER OF THE ALUMNI
HELD ON MAY 13, 1907 AND A REVIEW
OF THE YEAR 1906-1907**

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Union Theological Seminary. The Seminary: Its Spirit and Aims. Addresses Given at the Annual Dinner of the Alumni held on May 13, 1907 and a review of the year 1906-1907 by Various

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The Alumni Club of the Union Theological Seminary invited four members of the Faculty to make the addresses at the Annual Dinner of the Alumni on Monday evening, May 13, 1907, and suggested as the common topic, "The Seminary." The addresses, as setting forth the spirit and aims of the Seminary, are now printed by request. The summary of the events of the year 1906-1907, which was given at the luncheon on May 14, is appended.



THE SEMINARY AND THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

THOMAS C. HALL

It is a presumption on my part, even by request, to attempt to formulate in the name of the great spiritual fellowship of Union Theological Seminary, the Christian message. If that message were an opinion, or set of opinions, I would not dare to do it. A small uncultured group can unite on opinions, but the more intelligent we grow the more impossible is it to agree on opinions. It is not opinion but purpose that unites the faculty of Union Seminary. It is not opinion but purpose that binds together the great and increasing Alumni body whose zeal and enthusiasm are our constant inspiration.

The world would be a stupid place if we all had one opinion. The charm and inspiration of many a social family meeting of the Seminary are the vast variety of opinions, born of honest conviction on the basis of special study. We have no fears in talking out our hearts, for there burns in our midst the great common purpose, with clearer and clearer light. This is our enthusiasm, this our bond of Union.

It was my lot, as I returned last year from Europe, to spend a short three days—rainy days and cold they were—in venerable Rome. Never was the old impression stronger upon me than in those three days, of how the beautiful older mediævalism had overlaid the Christ with the gaudy garments of mythology. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus was simply lost amidst the Virgin Mary images, the pictures of the infant Jesus and the kneeling, bejewelled ecclesiastics. It is not a grateful task to tear aside the veil so patiently but so mistakenly woven. It is a dangerous attitude of mind that is

bent upon the destruction of pagan dualism and misty mediæval mythologies; only the recognition of the purpose in its greater divinity; only the sense that even the glory and beauty of mediæval scholasticism are a snare if they hide that purpose, can give us either courage or loving wisdom enough to attempt the undertaking.

Protestantism has never quite freed herself from the bonds of that mediæval scholasticism. She continued to do her thinking even in the days of her heroic struggle in Greek categories and in the terms of that scholasticism which was born of imperial ambitions. It was, therefore, no accident that the new Protestantism of Union Theological Seminary flung herself upon the recovery of the sources of our Christian inspirations and began to teach men to think in the categories of the recovered Old Testament, and in the glorious freedom and simplicity of a New Testament read without the colored glasses of ecclesiastical commentary. May the time never come when the Seminary will be false to the free and scholarly traditions of her splendid past! May we, who breathe that freedom and enter into the labors of those who have taught us where to find this spring of living water, never be faithless or afraid as we formulate the message born of personal contact with the life God has so freely given us.

For the message of the Seminary is given not on the authority of a church or a creed, or even a book, however sacred, but on the authority of the living God, as He has in book or creed, in joy and sorrow become our personal experience. And all we can hope to do is to take our pupils by the hand and lead them into the presence of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, thenceforth they are themselves in vital contact with Him and know Him, not because we told them but because they themselves have seen and heard.

Now this purpose is no abstract, academic thing, it is a concrete and ever present reality. We know the purpose of God because we have seen Jesus Christ. That great purpose has laid hold of us and will not let us go. All life is glorified and given eternal meaning because we have seen that incarnation, unique and splendid, of God's loving, redeeming purpose in the face of our elder brother, Jesus Christ. His life is the formulation of the message of the Seminary to the world. As

He was redeeming love so is God redeeming love, so are we to be redeeming lives.

He calls us to the kingdom of His redeeming purpose. I love to link the messages of Paul and John. Brethren, now are we the Sons of God and let us fill out in our bodies that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, for God is now so loving the world that He is giving, as He has given in all ages, His beloved sons that that world may not perish, but through them have everlasting life. But we can only thus redeem when we draw our life from purposeful union with the only begotten son of our Father.

Again the purpose of the World's Redeemer was not His own soul's salvation. The taunt of His enemies was His noblest tribute: He saved others, Himself He could not save. Our purpose is the redemption of the world and the revelation to all the ages of the Father whom we have come to know and love in the face of Christ Jesus. We have seen God and we cannot rest until the world also sees Him, until the world, God's beautiful world, reflects the heart of God in all the splendor of His redeeming love in the beauty of His holiness.

Thus the message of the Union Seminary is formulated in the Kingdom purpose of God as that purpose was proclaimed in the life and death of our divine Master. We may have many opinions about means and methods, many shades of thought and feeling in expressing the message, many moods and various levels of inspiration, but this is our purpose born in an unshakable faith in love and life of the Eternal God, that from sea to sea and from pole to pole men shall know God because they have seen Him in the cross of Christ and the resurrection glory of a divine social order.

If ever the work of Union Seminary has seemed critical and destructive, it has only been so because the way was seemingly blocked by human traditions and outworn formulæ. Criticism and destruction have never been more than incidental. The main message of our fellowship is the cry to men of all opinions but of our good will to help build with us the Kingdom of our God. If men will join with us in interpreting the world in the terms of a spiritual ethics, born of contact with this Kingdom purpose to which we are called, we will not quarrel with them as they allow themselves the luxury of