

Southern Baptist Convention
Office of Press Representative
Mr. Albert McClellan
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RELEASE: A.Ms. Monday, May 19.

SALUTE THE CHURCH

by J. Howard Williams

Dr. J. Howard Williams, executive secretary of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, is a native of Texas and graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Seminary. He was Texas executive secretary from 1931 to 1936 when he resigned to be pastor at Amarillo. He left the First Church in Oklahoma City to return to the Texas leadership post in 1946.

In the Armed Services they teach the new recruit to salute. They first tell of the mechanics of the salute and then the significance of it. It is a recognition of superiority of rank. It is a show of respect. It is a mark of deference.

The entire life of the Apostle Paul was a salute to the church, when considered in this sense, for he said, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it". Paul saw in it that which was worthy of his respect and all of his mighty efforts were given in the belief that its holy mission was superior to that of any man-made institution.

I. SALUTE THE CHURCH BECAUSE OF ITS FOUNDER

Some years ago, an eminent author, in preparing the manuscript for his ninetieth volume, became aware of the singular contribution made by certain individuals over the centuries. Later he wrote an article on the ten greatest men of history, placing them in the order of their contribution to the welfare of the world. First on that list was the name of Jesus of Nazareth for, said the author, who was not a Christian, Jesus of Nazareth did more to bless mankind than any other character of history.

By many, Jesus was called the Great Teacher. In the New Testament, thirty-nine times He is called or referred to as a Teacher. His principles of pedagogy are used today by our most learned educators. Jesus could have established a school, but He did not. By many, Jesus is called the Great Physician. Much of His ministry was given to the blessed work of healing the bodies and minds of the people. He could have established a hospital, but He did not. Jesus loved little children. Often He laid His hand in tender benediction upon them. He could have established an orphanage, but He did not. Jesus loved all men. He urged them to act as brothers. He could have established a fraternal order, but He did not.

It is easy to believe that Jesus with His superior intellect, His remarkable understanding of human need, His compassionate heart of love and His inordinate desire to bless humanity, could have established any other of many institutions which do good among us. Rather, He passed them by and left the world just one institution and He called it "my church". Doubtless He established the church because in His infinite wisdom and with His compassionate heart, He believed the church could do more for humanity than any other institution. When, therefore, I think of the church as the institution given to the world by its greatest Lover and Benefactor, it is easy for me to join the ancient apostle in saluting the church, in recognizing its superiority, in showing it deference.

II. SALUTE THE CHURCH BECAUSE OF ITS ACHIEVEMENTS

It is true that Jesus did not establish a school, but He established an institution which became the prolific mother of schools. This is evidenced in the western world and particularly in America, where all of the older schools of higher learning were established by Christians. Harvard University, the oldest school on American soil, was established by Christians and a Baptist minister was its first president. William and Mary, the second oldest school, was established by Christians. Yale University, the third oldest school, was established by Christians as were Columbia of New York, Princeton of Trenton, the University of Chicago, Colgate and Brown. In my own beloved State of Texas, Baylor University, a Baptist institution and the oldest in the Lone Star State, was serving

young people for forty-two years before the State University of Texas opened its doors to receive its first pupils. Christian education was the forerunner of our great public school educational system and doubtless did much to give it birth.

The Savior did not establish a hospital and yet the care of the sick and the advancement of medical science are conspicuously absent where the church has not gone. It has been stated that two-thirds of the earth's population is not within reach of scientific medical care. One can study the globe of the world and find that two-thirds live where the church has not flourished and the Savior is little known. In Christian lands medical science is advancing and an acute conscience is demanding that the bodies and minds of the people be given attention.

The Savior did not establish an orphanage and yet wherever the church is opened, the lives of little children have become precious. In many non-Christian lands, child life is cheap and in some, parents have the legal authority to murder the children they do not desire to keep.

In our own land fraternities flourish. Service clubs are popular and the good neighbor idea has become the keystone of our foreign policy. These things are basically expressions of Christian attitudes.

All of these things and others that could be named are blessed contributions of the Christian program and yet in a sense they are but by-products of the church of our Lord. In its primary mission, the church operates in a field largely to itself. Its textbook is the Bible and the Bible is a revelation which speaks on some subjects about which man could not know aside from a revelation. Man can know about an intelligent Being whose existence is indispensable in any logical explanation of the universe or the microscopic world. Yet he could not know of the loving and compassionate heart of God aside from the Bible. Man could know about sin, but he could not know about its eternal consequences aside from the Word of God. Since the dawn of recorded history there is evidence of an intense and unutterable longing by man for immortality and yet no one has spoken with authority on that subject except the authors of the Book, inspired of God.

The church proclaims a blessed philosophy of life. The church tells of the grace of God, adequate for every human need. It therefore offers a pardon for sin, a balm for hurt minds, an assurance for the soul, a comfort for the bereaved, a hope for those who stand beside the open grave and a reward for faithful service. It speaks on issues of time and tells of the life beyond the grave. It tells of a God of power and yet of character, a Judge who is just and yet offers justification for one who believes, an infinite being who can thunder against evil and whisper wooings of love. The church is privileged to proclaim the nature, the heart and the benevolent plan of God as such are unfolded in and by the life of His Son, our Savior.

These considerations make it easy for me to join the ancient apostle in saluting the church, in showing respect to the church, in recognizing the superiority of the church.

III. EVERY MAN CAN SALUTE THE CHURCH

This can and should be done first of all by bowing in humble submission before the great Head of the church, Jesus Christ our Lord. To recognize one's sin and rebellion against God, to repent of that sin, to see in Christ the one and only Savior from sin, to call for redeeming grace is a sincere and genuine salute to the church.

To unite with His church and follow the Savior's example in the beautiful ordinance of baptism, one can salute the church. In this initiatory ordinance, the candidate can have indelibly impressed upon his mind and heart that the only reason he can be a Christian is because Christ died on the cross, was buried in a literal grave and arose from that grave on the third day, triumphant over death. The candidate is to enter a watery grave, indicating he has died to sin but has risen to newness of life. Therefore, the candidate in this beautiful ordinance can proclaim his faith and publish to the world his belief that salvation is available to all men through One who died on the cross, was buried and is arisen from the dead.

One can salute the church by studying its great doctrines that affect life and death, time and eternity. One can study with the intensity of ardent scientists the program of the church, its message and mission to the world. This would seem to be especially appropriate today in the face of a world which is

groping for the way. It is a world which is poignantly aware of the inadequacy of wars and other man-made programs to solve its problems and cure its ills.

One can salute the church by giving himself whole-heartedly in implementing its program. Church members form a field to be cultivated. Their souls need to be nourished. They should be also a force for righteousness seeking to better the outside world. A church is not an institution to coddle its members. It is to be a dynamic factor in crusading against every wrong in the world. No Christian ought to be comfortable so long as there is any injustice anywhere among men. The church should speak out on every issue of life, seeking to interpret the Word and work of God as they affect human problems. It is wrong for the church to stand by silent while a struggling world grapples with problems, the basic solutions of which can be found in the Word of God. It is both silly and sinful for Christian men to suppose that pagan men shall by accident stumble on to the Christian answer to man's problems.

It therefore becomes the inescapable duty of the church to speak of the subject of sin, to call men to repentance and faith. It is imperative also for the church to speak on those issues and help to correct those conditions which vitally affect the growth and godly development of the souls and lives of men. The church, therefore, should be concerned with matters of human relations. Jesus was and is. The solution of this problem of human relations affects any two men who may have a mutual concern. It affects the home, capital and labor, society at large. It is the ultimate answer to the whole problem of war and international relations.

The church should serve as a watchman, warning the people when dangers approach. It should be jealous of the rights and welfare of all. Recognizing that government is ordained of God, it should, for instance, cry out against anything that would impair the freedom of the government to render its greatest service to the people. It is for this very reason that we Baptists and others contend for the separation of church and state. Much bloody history has been written because of sloppy thinking in this and the resultant action in some instances was the bloodiest of recorded wars. There are today three theories in this field of human experience. One is that the church should dominate the state, making it a creature of the church. Another is that the state should dominate the church, making it the instrument of the state. A third is that the church and the state should be separate, each respecting and cooperating with the other. Guided by an enlightened conscience and sense of responsibility each can compliment the service of the other and live side by side in peace. It is for this latter view that we stand and shall forever contend. Living under such an ideal, our nation has grown to the present vast proportions with a minimum of conflict between church and state. To preserve this we shall contend earnestly and unremittently against any encroachment which would violate this principle or become an entering wedge to destroy its beneficent effect upon the lives of all the people.

One can salute the church by pouring into its life adequate portions of his own. Such can be expressed in terms of influence exerted, time given, service rendered and money contributed. The program of Christ is a total program. It affects all of life and all people throughout the entire world. It is preposterous for its devotees to think that such can be accomplished by spasmodic spurts of interest, indifferent living and emotional contributions of money. The Christian life is a total experience and is to command one's all. The program of the church from the cultivation of the individual soul to the conquest of the whole world waits on the day when Christian men everywhere shall make their very existence a glorious salute to the church of our gracious Savior who with considered deliberation loved the church and gave Himself for it.

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RELEASE: For A.M.'s,
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HOW TRAINING UNION INFLUENCED MY DECISION FOR THE MINISTRY

By R. B. Culbreth

R. B. Culbreth is pastor of the First Baptist Church in Miami. He is a 1944 graduate of Howard College and received his Th.D. from Southern Seminary in 1951. This young preacher and evangelist was a pastor in Alabama and Kentucky before coming to Florida in 1949.

It was the fourth Sunday night, September, 1941, during a Training Union Program, in Central Baptist Church, Miami, Florida, when the impression was felt that changed my whole life. Slight waves of ministerial impressions had swept over me previously as a farm boy in Alabama, but had been quickly brushed aside with the feeling of inadequacy. Never could I stand before a group and preach, even though I did feel a deep sense of gratitude to a loving God who had removed my sins.

But this night it was different! The program was on the subject, "Our Cities Need Christ." The author, I believe, was Dr. Roland Leavell. God spoke to me from that lesson. Such an overwhelming tide of spiritual power now flooded my soul and pressed for a decision. I had reached the forks of the road. A decision must be made!

All parts on the program were given and the union was dismissed. With a strange fire burning within I walked out of the Training Union and into the preaching hour. My ears did not hear the singing nor the sermon that night, because God's Spirit was pressing for a decision.

Never shall I forget that hour after church. Going straight to my room with a heavy heart, needing a friend in whom to confide who would understand, but not knowing one I felt terribly alone. My eyes fell upon a Training Union magazine and with indifferent fingers the pages were turned. Suddenly my eyes saw the story of Henry C. Rogers. With growing intensity and quickening impulses I read how as a farm boy he went to Howard College, without money or political pull, but determined to get an education so he could better serve the Lord. "This is it," I cried. "If God helped him through, He'll do the same for me." Then with complete assurance I sank to my knees and said, "Thank you Lord for showing me the way. With your help I'll do the best I can." Such a blessed relief, sweet and so satisfying, now came to abide within, and a young man of nineteen arose to start the long road of study and preparation for a life-time service for the best employer in the world -- Jesus Christ our Saviour.

I thank God for the Training Union. Only eternity can tell of the spiritual fires that have been ignited within the breast of young people as they stand upon their feet to tell others of Christ and His great work. May God's richest blessing continue upon Dr. Lambdin and all the lesson writers as they let God's Spirit lead them. Training Union helps a person realize that he has a tongue and with that tongue, he can praise his Lord in testimony and song. Brethren, these things ought to continue.

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CHRIST SPEAKS TO THE NATIONS

By Baker James Cauthen

This is a time of unparalleled gravity in the world's history. Forces which openly deny the existence of God and regard man as a mere thing have a settled, determined purpose to gain control of the entire world. Never has the cause of human liberty been in greater peril.

In such a time it is urgent for the whole world to listen to Christ who alone has a word of certainty in the midst of confusion. The heartache of the world is understood by Jesus Christ. He looks with tender compassion upon the millions who now suffer in war-stricken areas and the hundreds of millions who are ground under the heel of communist tyrants.

The sight of nearly half the world's population still bowing before idols with no knowledge of the living Saviour is a deep sorrow to the heart of Jesus. But more pathetic spectacle is that of people surrounded by opportunities for the knowledge of Christ in our own country who disregard the Saviour and go their way without him.

Christ is able to transform both the individual and the area that he touches. Reassuring evidences of radical transformation of character when the individual is touched by Jesus Christ are seen in Japan and other countries. Christ has the capacity to take empty lives and make them to become sources of overflowing blessings to people around them. He can take the deepest tragedies and transform them into a fountain of blessings.

Christ speaks to the nations with dynamic commands, calling upon people everywhere, regardless of the race, to confess him as Saviour before the world. In some places under communist control people confess Christ openly even though it means they shortly must undergo severe persecution. He commands those who trust him to make his salvation known to the ends of the earth.

To make Christ known throughout the world it is indispensable that men and women go to lands now in spiritual darkness and commit themselves permanently to the task. This involves learning other languages, adjusting to other cultures, living under strange and often difficult conditions, facing hazardous, chaotic conditions, and sharing with the people in the suffering they face.

As Christ came from heaven, being made in fashion as a man, so we must go to mission lands and identify ourselves with the people we would reach. This is the Christ of world redemption. While it is true that the world of the missionaries can be supplemented and assisted by well-planned missions, so successfully demonstrated by the preaching mission to Japan, it remains true that there is no substitute for the sacrifice, labor, and dedication required to go out to the mission field and let Christ shine forth in a life identified with the people.

It follows, therefore, that every Christian needs to find and do God's will regardless of the cost. Dr. William L. Wallace, who died in a communist prison in China giving all he had to the service of Jesus Christ, shows us anew the meaning of bearing Christ's cross. Not everyone must suffer and die as did he; but the cross for which he gave his life must be in the heart of all who would make the Saviour known.