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IN MEMORIAM

SINCE the July number of the BULLETIN was issued, there has passed away from us the one who for twenty-two years administered the affairs of Princeton Seminary, and whose pen, during those years, supplied much of the material for this Seminary publication. We regret to have to announce in this formal and official way the death of Dr. J. Ross Stevenson, President Emeritus of Princeton Theological Seminary. Most of our readers will already have heard from other sources of his lamented death; some in remote corners of the world will perchance learn it from these pages for the first time.

In the spring of the present year Dr. Stevenson was suddenly taken ill and underwent a serious operation. He did not recover strength as he should normally have done, and it became evident that still another operation was necessary. The patient was accordingly removed from the Princeton Hospital to the Harkness Pavilion of the Presbyterian Hospital, New York, where he was operated upon again. All appeared to be going well, when suddenly one Sabbath morning, August 13, and totally unexpected by the hospital staff, our former leader passed away. The funeral service was held in Miller Chapel the following Wednesday, in the presence of a large company of relatives and friends, after which the remains of Dr. Stevenson were laid to rest among Princeton's great in the local cemetery.

I first met Dr. Stevenson in 1914 when a student in my Senior year in the Seminary. That year he came to Princeton as our new President. He taught our class a course on missions, using as his text-book one of the volumes of the Report of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910. He had himself been a leading member of that famous gathering which inaugurated the modern ecumenical movement. We saw him, therefore, on the first hour he met us as a class in the framework of his two master passions—foreign missions and the unity of the Church of Christ. These were the two foci in which moved the life and thought of the new President of Princeton Seminary. Fourteen years passed ere I saw him again. The gracious hospitality with which I was received at Springdale by Dr. and Mrs. Stevenson when I gave the Students' Lectures on Missions made a lasting impression upon me. In the quality of that welcome I was being introduced to a vital part of the Princeton tradition.



J. ROSS STEVENSON, D.D., LL.D.
1866-1939

DR. STEVENSON AS A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHMAN*

ROBERT E. SPEER, D.D., LL.D.

WE are met here today bound together in the unity of a great sorrow, a great joy, and a great love. As regards our dear friend who has reached home, our sorrow is swallowed up in the joy that he is now in the presence of the Saviour whom he so devotedly served, and in the confidence of his participation now in those vast ministries of the Saints in Light, which, we must believe, permit him to be here in the inspiration of his presence with us today. As for ourselves, nothing can swallow up our sorrow, but it is made the more tender by the precious memories of his life and character that come thronging in upon our minds and hearts. It is of these in the sphere of our own immediate communion that I have the privilege of speaking for a little while in this our gathering of love.

I have known Dr. Stevenson for nearly half a century in the intimacy of the closest possible human friendship, and it is one's joy, in looking back over these years, to say that not one single shadow falls anywhere on this friendship and that one can speak without restriction or any limitation of perfect confidence and justified trust.

He was born, as we know, on the first of March, 1866, in the village of Ligonier, in Westmoreland County, in Southwestern Pennsylvania, of the best Scotch-Irish Presbyterian ancestry. His father was a Presbyterian minister in this small country community. He was next to the youngest son of a large family, the pride of the family and his mother's joy. We used to tease him by recalling the alleged remark

*Address delivered in Miller Chapel on December 5.

of his mother that "Rossie was the bossy of the posse," which was only one way of expressing her affection for him and his qualities of headship. Neither then nor in later years was there anything of the boss in his fraternal leadership.

He went, at the age of 16, to Washington and Jefferson College and, after a career of highest honor, was graduated in 1886 at the age of 20, and went immediately to McCormick Theological Seminary. That was the year of the origin of the Student Volunteer Movement and that interest spread as a prairie fire through the colleges and universities and seminaries of our land. There was no institution in which that fire burned more brightly than in McCormick Seminary. There were 41 members of Dr. Stevenson's class and a large number of these volunteered for service in the foreign field: Dr. Stevenson; Dr. Charles Bradt, who was a flame of zeal in the Church at home; George Fulton, who went to Japan; John Fitch, who went to China; Samuel Lapsley, who went to Africa, and a company of others who entered the home and foreign fields and deepened the missionary devotion of our Church. Samuel Moffett of Korea was in the class ahead of him.

Dr. Stevenson was graduated from McCormick in 1889 and spent the following year in Berlin carrying on graduate studies in Church History and New Testament, and returned from Berlin to be ordained by the Presbytery of Kansas City in 1890. He settled for his first pastorate in the Church of Sedalia, Missouri. He spent four years in a rich and fruitful pastorate there, developing in those early years the gifts and qualities which were to be used

so richly in the service of the Church in the years that were to follow. A few days ago I met in Roanoke one of his old students, the Reverend Spencer Edmunds, whose settlement he had himself secured in the church of Sedalia on Mr. Edmunds' graduation from Princeton, and he told me that the memory of Dr. Stevenson in the fresh youth of his ministry had still lingered in Sedalia after a generation vivid and beloved. Dr. Cleland McAfee was then a member of the Synod of Missouri, and he writes: "We used to meet every year at the Synod meetings, which were of the mass type and not delegated. I sometimes played his accompaniments for him, for he almost always had to sing at some place in the meeting. He had a fine tenor voice, which was much needed in the general volume of ministerial music. Several people have spoken of seeing the two of us, both with straw-colored hair, mine redder than his, sitting near the front of the meeting ready for anything that came along in the way of music or other help. He was a good Presbyterian; certainly he was a good Synoder. He came to the Synod with a high recommendation from Herrick Johnson and others, and his eastern birth and experience stood him in good stead."

He came away after four years' pastorate in Sedalia to accept a position in McCormick Seminary, first as Adjunct Professor and later as full Professor of Church History, from 1894 to 1902. I have a letter from Professor Zenos with regard to the service Dr. Stevenson rendered written with characteristic insight and appreciation. Dr. Zenos bears witness that Dr. Stevenson lifted the instruction of his department in McCormick Seminary to a level unsurpassed by any other Seminary in that western section of our land. He regarded himself as settled for life in the work he was now doing. Dr. Herrick Johnson said that he must never allow himself to be turned away to the local pastorate and

resisted his consideration of calls to various churches in the West. But when the call came to the Fifth Avenue Church in New York City, in 1902, and Dr. Stevenson regarded it his first duty to accept, Dr. Johnson concurred. He went to New York, accordingly, and spent seven years in glorious service in what was thought then to be the premier church of our denomination and one of the greatest churches of our country. I want to read from the action of the Session of the Fifth Avenue Church when the call came to him to the Brown Memorial Church in Baltimore. This is the judgment of the Session expressing the mind of the congregation. "We desire to record the following earnest, though inadequate, appreciation of our dear pastor's ministry amongst us.

"In the preaching of the Word he has faithfully and clearly opened the Scriptures to our minds and hearts, giving to many a new vision of duty and privilege. He has been vigilant for our souls, sympathized with our limitations, urged us to a more consecrated use of our talents as God's stewards. He has not spared himself. Though called upon by the Church at large, by the Presbytery and by loyal Christian organizations for service on Boards and Committees, he has cheerfully and efficiently at the same time, discharged the many and exacting duties and offices of his pastorate.

"He has endeared himself to us and to our children in our homes, and in our Church activities, by his lovable personal qualities. He has been sweet, gentle, sympathetic and tender, while unswerving in his devotion to his ideals and in his appeals to us to higher Christian living.

"We record also our love and affection for his dear wife, whose helpful service and sympathetic counsel in our church societies and in every good effort has been so constant an inspiration to the women of the church. At their request we join

in facilitating their removal but with sincere sorrow and extreme reluctance. We ask God's blessing upon and guidance for them both in their new home.

"We record, as due to Dr. Stevenson's courage, zeal and fidelity, the growth and development of our church since he came among us. In communicant strength, in the amounts of our giving to the Lord, in the enlarged vision of our duty to God's work of Missions at home and abroad, in an increased appreciation of our obligation to the community by reason of our location and strength, we testify, not that we have done what we should, but that what we have done is due under God's blessing to his inspiring courage, energy, and wise leadership.

"We commend him and his dear ones to the church and its families at Baltimore as worthy of their love and confidence, and as sure to inspire them to greater and more efficient service in the work of our Lord and Master, Jesus the Christ."

And I think I may add to this in the intimacy and familiarity of our company here today the testimony borne to him by our friend Dr. George Trull. He was for some time Dr. Stevenson's assistant and almost as close to him as a son could be to a father. He writes:

"Recalling Dr. Stevenson's pastorate in Fifth Avenue Church, New York, his emphasis was constantly upon the spiritual side of the work and upon the exaltation of Christ. His preaching was expository and helpful. He was a man of much prayer, an indefatigable worker, faithful pastor, unselfish, tactful, friendly, generous,—a grand man to work with.

"He loved to sing, and often in public worship his clear tenor voice could be heard distinctly. One of his favorite hymns was

*Angel voices ever singing
Round Thy throne of light.*

"He was interested in all of the organizations of the church and promoted them. In the Sunday School he heartily backed up all that was attempted to strengthen and broaden the curriculum and the teaching methods. He encouraged the pioneer work which it did along the line of missionary education.

"He promoted the benevolence giving of his congregation. Through his efforts large gifts were received for the local church's missions or branches in New York City, for the Home Board and for Foreign Missions. A detained Student Volunteer, he was distinctively a missionary pastor. He encouraged his assistant, Rev. Ernest F. Hall, to go to Korea and secured the support from one of the members of the church. He prayed and planned that the church might have its own Parish Abroad. With the Foreign Board's co-operation, this was established at Shuntetu, China. He raised thousands of dollars to staff the station and to equip it with the necessary buildings, securing generous memorial gifts from individuals and families in the congregation. He enlisted the continued support of this work throughout his pastorate and kept the church in vital touch with the missionaries.

"One of my fondest recollections is of the Stevenson home. It was much more than the ordinary manse. It was outstanding in its influence. Anyone entering it received a spiritual uplift. It was a veritable Bethel, where consecration, radiant Christianity, cordiality, gracious hospitality and culture were all beautifully blended under the winsome personalities of Dr. and Mrs. Stevenson. It was natural that in such an atmosphere two of the three sons should receive their inspiration for foreign mission service."

Those who knew the Church and the city in those days realize what a miracle of faithfulness his ministry of those years was.

In 1909 he was called to Brown Memorial Church, to what some would regard as a place of less prominence and responsibility. He felt it was God's assigned field for him and that it was his duty to go. And there are many of us here this afternoon who could bear witness to the ministry he wrought in the city of Baltimore. Dr. Finney will pardon my reading from his beautiful letter:

"I find it very difficult to put in words just how devoted the Brown Memorial people were to Dr. and Mrs. Stevenson. He was certainly one of the most spiritual minded men I have ever known, consecrated, and devoted to his work in Brown Memorial and to all phases of it. In the pulpit and in the home he was untiring in his efforts to be of service to anyone in need, and his ministrations were much appreciated by all. As a preacher he was acceptable to both the educated and more intelligent, and to the average man whom he always had in mind and by whom he made himself understood. His kindly, genial nature was one of his understanding characteristics; he was very human, understanding, and was helpful in the sickroom as well as elsewhere, for he was always welcome, and his presence brought hope and comfort.

"The cooperation between him and the officers of the Church and the congregation was perfect. There never was heard the slightest criticism of him or any of his actions while here in Baltimore. No minister was more beloved than he, and his departure from Baltimore was deeply mourned, and was only mitigated by the fact of his going from here to the presidency of Princeton.

"It would be difficult to overestimate the beneficent character of the influence exerted by him in Baltimore, not only in Brown Memorial Church, but throughout the city at large."

This service ended Dr. Stevenson's ministry in the local pastorate, but did not end his pastoral service. He was always a pastor in temper and character. In one of his Fifth Avenue sermons he told the story of the Chinese potter, Pousa, who was commissioned once to make a piece of porcelain for the emperor which should never be surpassed. Dissatisfied with his effort, at last, in despair, he flung himself into the furnace. The contribution of his own life contributed just the chemical elements necessary to turn out the most superb piece of porcelain in history. Just so, though it was far from Dr. Stevenson's mind when he told the story that it would ever be applied to him, just so he threw his life into all the tasks that were assigned him of God to do.

In 1914 Dr. Stevenson was called from the pastorate in Baltimore to the Presidency of the Seminary here to succeed Dr. Francis L. Patton. He was not an alumnus of this Seminary, but there was not a graduate of the Seminary who entered more fully into the authentic tradition of this institution. He saturated himself in the writings of Samuel Miller, the Alexanders, and the Hodges, and belonged to the true succession of "the gentlemen of Princeton" as they were once scornfully termed. Some 1988 students were matriculated here during his presidency and all over the world today there are men in the Church at home and in the mission field abroad who bear the impress of his nobility of character.

The Trustees of the Seminary have placed on record their appreciation of Dr. Stevenson in the resolution which they adopted at their last meeting:

"As the Trustees review today, at this first meeting since his death, the years of Dr. Stevenson's connection with the Seminary, they desire to record their gratitude first, for his character and spirit, second, for his service to the Seminary, and third

for his contribution to the cause of world evangelization and Christian fellowship and unity.

"We thank God for his fidelity to truth and to duty, for his loyalty and steadfastness, for his tenacious adherence to the historic principles and authentic tradition of the Seminary, for his good cheer and geniality of spirit, for his affection in friendship, for his embodiment of Christian faith and love. We shall ever cherish the dear memory of a righteous man who loved God and truth above all things.

"We thank God for Dr. Stevenson's devoted and conscientious administration of his duties as President of the Seminary, for his fatherly and affectionate interest in the students, for his zeal to enlarge the Seminary's resources and facilities, illustrated in the beautiful restoration of Miller Chapel, the provision of Payne Hall for missionaries, and his still unfulfilled effort for a central social and dining hall, for his ideals of scholarship and the maintenance of our historic standards of conviction and instruction, for his representation of the Seminary before the General Assembly and the Church, for his efforts and prayers to the end that the torch lighted in this institution 127 years ago, and upheld by faithful hands throughout the generations might be borne forward undimmed into the generations to come.

"We thank God for the far-reaching ministry which God gave to Dr. Stevenson beyond and through his immediate duty here, for his evangelistic service in the World War, for his leadership of the Department of Church Cooperation and Union of our General Assembly since the establishment of the Department, and for the ever widening influence of his spirit and his counsels in the world movement of the Christian Church in Foreign Missions, and in the associations and organizations which have culminated in the World Christian Council. No one has contributed

more than he to these larger developments of Christian fellowship and unity.

"For these ministries and for all that he was and wrought, we give thanks to God, and we would take up from his memory a new devotion to the causes which he served, and especially to the work of this Seminary into which for all time has now been woven the influence of his life and spirit."

The opening years of his work in the Seminary were interrupted by the World War and our American participation in it. He left the Seminary and, for some months served in France under the Young Men's Christian Association, and returned then to go on with his work until he retired in 1936.

There were three great services which Dr. Stevenson rendered in our own communion for which we thank God. One was his service in this institution recognized in the resolution of the Trustees. There will be few of us in this room who will not bear testimony as to what Dr. Stevenson has been and done in the years of his presidency. Second was his larger work in the general activities of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. He was Moderator of the General Assembly in 1915, the year of the beginning of his active work in the Seminary. He served on 15 or 20 standing and permanent committees of our General Assembly. For seven years he was Vice-President of our College Board. In 1902 he became a member of the Board of Foreign Missions and served until his death. No one ever served the cause of Foreign Missions with more wisdom and fidelity than he. He was a "detained volunteer" and he and Dr. Mott in reality constituted for years the Executive Committee of the Student Volunteer Movement. He gave two sons out of his own home to the foreign mission field. No cause was nearer to his heart, nor in the presentation of any cause was he

given a voice of more persuasion. Thirdly, Dr. Stevenson's greatest work in connection with our Church, outside the Seminary, was his leadership in the Department of Church Cooperation and Union. There had been a committee in charge of these relationships in earlier years of which he was a member, and when the new department was organized in 1923, Dr. Stevenson became Chairman and was Chairman until his death. I watched him all the years of his leadership in this Department. I have seen him in difficult situation after difficult situation, but never once failing to represent the true temper and spirit of our own Church and of the whole Church of Christ in the world. He led our negotiations with the Methodist brethren in 1928, negotiations which promised a great deal for a while and then were held in abeyance by the movement of our Methodist friends for a great organic Methodist union. For years he represented our Church in the Federal Council. In all our negotiations with our sister Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, in our joint conferences, I never once saw him presiding as chairman. Invariably he would suggest someone representing one of the smaller denominations. He led us through the negotiations with the representatives of the United Presbyterian Church which we hoped would culminate in our organic union. I have attended between 30 and 40 General Assemblies of our Church and heard many addresses, but Dr. Stevenson's presentation in Columbus in 1934 of the proposed plan of union between our Church and the United Presbyterian Church was the most effective and satisfactory statement of the sort I ever heard. Speaking with superb under-statement and with the noblest spirit and with the greatest self-restraint, his masterly Christian presentation carried all the Assembly with it. It was quite obvious that Dr. Stevenson was representing the practically unanimous

mind of our whole communion. There were difficulties among the United Presbyterian brethren which postponed for the time being our hopes of union, but his patience and faith never failed. Of his general service in the cause of ecumenical Christian unity, our friend Dr. Robbins is to speak.

I will say only a few words in closing regarding the essential qualities of his character. Unless you should think the love, and it is great love, which lies behind what I am trying to say, should go beyond the bounds of sober truth, let me read some words from letters which have come: "He was so gracious and helpful," writes Dr. Raven. Bishop Perry spoke of "his discerning and sympathetic spirit"; Mr. Tompkins of "his triumphant faith in the communion of saints"; Dr. Evans, in behalf of Chi Alpha, of "his wisdom, his loving friendly nature, his tolerance and courage of spirit, his courtesy and kindness, his rare ability in promoting the unity and effective power of the Church"; the Rev. Irving Harris of "his amazing interest in younger people needing his help and advice and his instant, self-effacing readiness in putting himself at the disposal of all who came to him."

Old students write of him: "I remember his spirit of humility, tolerance, onward look and triumphant faith"; "I love him as a son might"; "I shall always carry with me in my ministry the indelible influence of a great soul"; "He entered into the plans and problems of each one under his spiritual care—not as a teacher and administrator only—but as an understanding and sympathetic friend"; "He is one of the few of whom I had heard whom it was no disillusionment to meet. Scarcely ever do I prepare a sermon that I do not think of something he said. Much of my interest in foreign missions derives from the contagion of his point of view. He was a man and that he consecrated all that he

had to the preaching of the Gospel made the ministry more worthwhile. I feel more of a touch with the old Valiants like Dr. Alexander and the first Hodge and John Witherspoon, more of a personal feeling for them now that they and he have come into the same peerage."

To these expressions may be added words from some of those associated with Dr. Stevenson in his wider relations. From Dr. Adolf Keller: "In our ecumenical circles he was a member whose voice had weight and whose heart was felt even in the midst of theoretical discussions"; from Deane Edwards, "We have lost a great man, stalwart in body, spirit and leadership. He will be sorely missed in all those areas of the Church's life where he rendered such notable service. We shall miss him especially in the ranks of the ecumenical movement where for so long he has been in the front line. He was an able and earnest Christian leader speaking impressively for the Church and the Gospel which he loved"; from G. F. Barbour, "His was a truly noble life and his work for Christianity will go on and bear fruit. But more than what he did I shall treasure the memory of his Christlike character"; from Professor Edwin G. Conklin, "He was always so generous, so sincere, so loyal that his memory will always be a blessed possession"; from S. R. Shoemaker, "It was not his great public work in the Church and the churches that I shall remember most—though it was great—but the serenity of his spirit, the fire beneath that serenity, his deep earnestness and his overflowing good humor"; from the Archbishop of York, "As a real friend, I feel his loss most deeply. He was a veteran of the Unity Movement whose service to it by his devotion, his kindness and his wisdom was of incalculable value."

I must add, out of many, one other tribute from a warm friend of my own to whom I once introduced Dr. Stevenson

and who came to feel toward him a deep and reverent affection, Sydney Hutchins, the police officer who controls traffic at the junction of Broadway and Twenty-third Street: "Though busy and in demand he would make his way through the traffic and stop and shake hands with me. His kind face and word of sympathy—it was like a father. The good he has done will live on. What an example and heritage for his sons. He has left impressions I shall not forget."

It is hard to stop in this tribute to one whom I have known so long and so well and so deeply loved, but I will refer in closing simply to five of his characteristics. First was his love and knowledge of the Bible. I doubt whether we have had more than a half dozen men in positions of Christian leadership in our country during this generation whose mind and heart and character were so saturated with the Bible or whose memory was so richly stored with it as Dr. Stevenson's. On appropriate occasions he would make addresses composed only of Scripture passages woven together with amazing intellectual and spiritual skill. And the solidity and balance and justice and integrity both of his judgments and of his character were due to the strength and light of the Bible penetrating his life. Second, there was his love of music, of the great hymns of the Church. He had a strong, rich voice and he loved to sing and he stood for the noble tunes. Such an influence was of immeasurable value in setting ideals for students for the ministry. Third, was his love of children. He knew the names of the children of his friends and would inquire after them and it was a joy to see him with little children who recognized their friend in him. Among the letters which have come is one from my friend, Dr. Arthur Board of San Antonio: "I shall never forget the evening thirteen years ago this fall when we returned to Prince-

ton from a day of apartment hunting in New York and found Dr. Stevenson walking the floor with our little baby daughter." Fourth was his ideal and love of home. Students saw in his own home what a Christian home should be and he used it with unlimited Christian unselfishness as an instrument of pastoral ministry in the life of the Seminary. In their home he and Mrs. Stevenson unconsciously demonstrated what a Christian home could do. And fifthly, there was his missionary spirit, the spirit of love that thought of others, not of self, and that spirit was spent to the one great end of making Christ known to the world.

But the last word must be of his love of Christ and of his fearless and unflinching loyalty to truth. These were his two great

qualities, his loving-kindness and his steadfast fortitude. There was no lack of his compliance with the central admonitions of the Gospel: "Little children, love one another," "Be ye kindly affectioned one to another," and also with Paul's great words: "Be ye steadfast, unmovable." Ross Stevenson was never open to the "Woe" of Ecclesiasticus—"Woe to the man who has lost patience," "patience" being the old translation of "steadfastness." And no man here today could more faithfully embody than he the firm courage and fidelity of Seneca's pilot: "O Neptune, you may sink me or you may save me, but I will hold my rudder true." So he held on his way through calm and storm and has come at last to his desired haven. For what he was and did now thank we all our God.

AN APOSTLE OF UNITY*

REV. HOWARD CHANDLER ROBBINS, D.D.

THE Trustees of Princeton Seminary have graciously invited me to represent organizations other than Presbyterian in which Dr. Stevenson was interested, and to speak regarding his activities as an Ecumenical Churchman. It was suggested that in this address all the other organizations should be represented. That would be desirable if they were not so many. The list of the mere names of them is longer than Homer's catalogue of ships, which is generally skipped in Freshman Greek. Perhaps it will serve the purpose if from this long list we select the organizations in which Dr. Stevenson's personality and work came to be most widely known and warmly appreciated by his colleagues in other Churches. These are the Faith and Order and the Life and Work Movements,

and the Department of Church Cooperation and Union.

Dr. Stevenson was active in the Faith and Order Movement even before its first World Conference in Lausanne in 1927. He was a delegate to that Conference, and a vice-chairman of its Continuation Committee, and after the death of Bishop Brent he became the chairman of its Business Committee. He was a vice-president of its Second World Conference which met in Edinburgh in 1937, and he served as chairman of the American Section of its Continuation Committee.

The first business of the Lausanne Conference was to pay tribute to the memory of Robert Hallowell Gardiner, the man to whom, together with Bishop Brent, the Faith and Order Movement was most largely indebted for its inception. Dr. Stevenson made this memorial address in

* Address delivered in Miller Chapel on December 5.