

No title

Notes on the Ministry

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No Date¹

The year that I became a resident student in the Harvard Divinity School, the address to the students was made by the then President of H.U.. The concluding sentence was in these words, "Gentlemen. I welcome you to the most venturesome profession of the twentieth century."²

That, I am sure, still holds.

At the ripe age of 91, that same man made a brief address in [the] Tremont Temple, after the last world war: "I look forward to the New Age with Hope."³

Two other things I want to speak of.

First. I was ordained and installed by a layman. That, with all its implications, I cherish.

Second. Charge to the minister:

The significant fact is that most of the important thinking of the time is being done outside of the Christian Churches. One of your tasks as a minister of religion is to carry forward the rich spiritual tradition of the past, and, so far as possible, work to bring together these divergent streams of life.

¹ Given the text this had to be written after Charles Eliot's remarks in 1925. The paper is the same as the paper Earl Davis used for preparing his sermons in Petersham. There is a reference on the last page—which clearly came from a different source than the first four pages—to a novel published in 1941. So we can tentatively date this to the mid-1940s.

² Charles William Eliot (1834-1926) was President of Harvard University from 1869 until 1909.

³ If Earl Davis' calculation of Charles Eliot's age is correct, this talk occurred in 1925. Eliot died the following year.

That charge still holds for me, and, I believe, is valid in any understanding of modern life, of current difficulties, and is an ever present factor in your decisions.

Some factors evolved, and some eliminated, upon all of which a minister comes at one time or another.

First. Our tradition goes back to the principles of the Congregational polity.

The Church exists before its officers.

- a. Separation of church and state.
- b. Minister of the congregation.
- c. Recent Amish election of minister.

So, in theory, the minister is of the people.

Back of that is the assumption that truth is discovered, not revealed.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. I came not to destroy but to fulfill."⁴

Not a trade, or a ladder for social standing.

Married ministry.

Profession

Call

One further page was attached to the pages of this manuscript with the text below. Clearly it is from a different—sadly unidentified—source. Here is its text.

...about patterns and abstractions would without end, but in actual fact there is something at the heart of it so intimately personal as to defy all definitive generalizations. Witness the

⁴ Matthew 5:17.

dear old priest in "The Keys to the Kingdom,"⁵ and ask why it has become and remained a best-seller for these long months.

"O Lord, for once, not thy will, but mine be done."⁶

Here we have a very genuine person, coming into direct conflict with an old generalization. The individual personality is peaking through.

Just what forces and factors.

⁵ A. J. Cronin, *The Keys of the Kingdom*, New York: Little, Brown, 1941.

⁶ Compare, Luke 22:42, "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."