

Graham, Frank P.

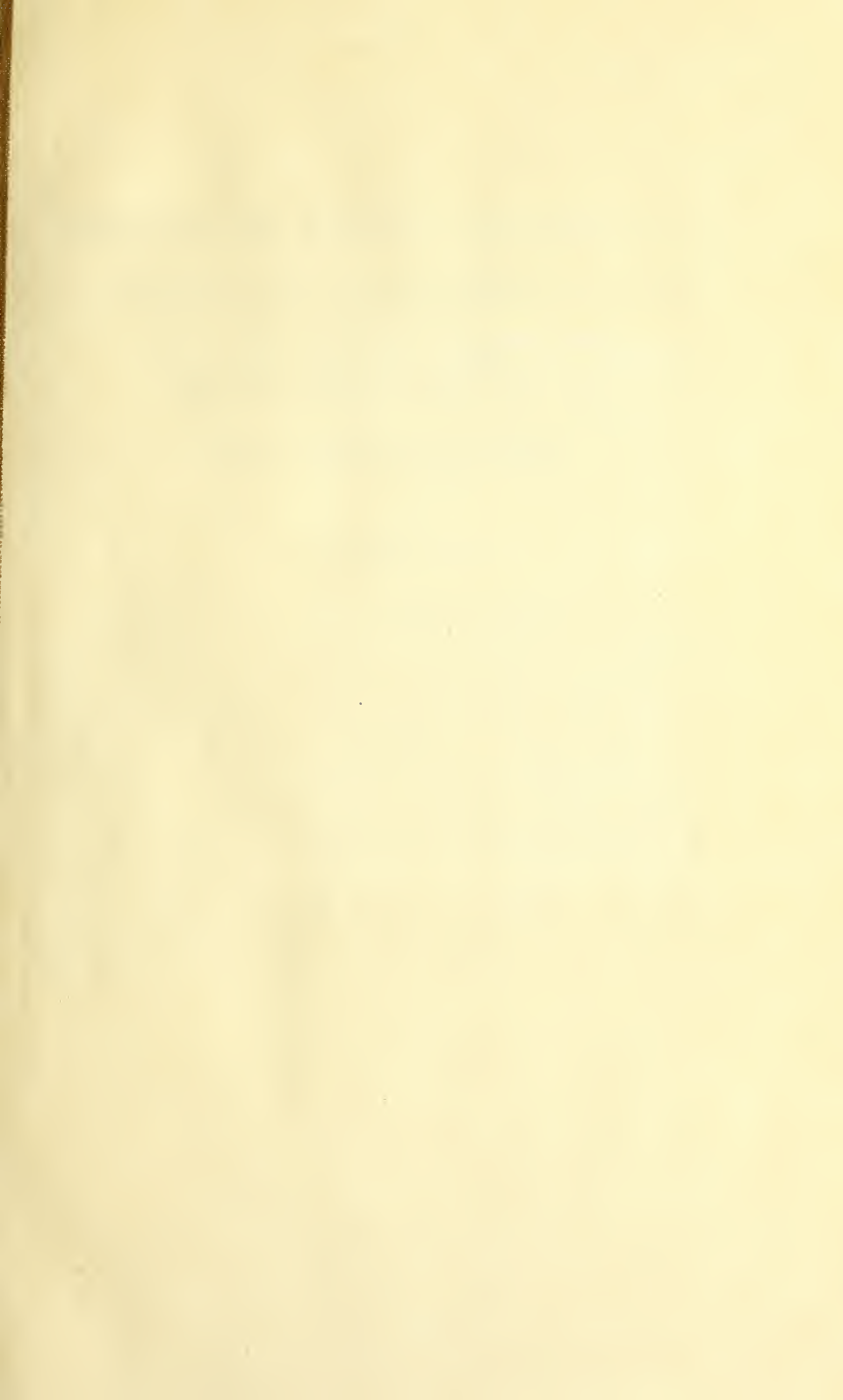
Summary

Div.S.
285.1756
G738S

DUKE
UNIVERSITY



DIVINITY SCHOOL
LIBRARY





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

*Summary by Frank P. Graham of his
written and spoken statements on
the case of the Chapel Hill
Presbyterian Church, late
1952 and early 1953.*

INTRODUCTION

For any help it may be in a constructive settlement of the question concerning the Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church now before the Orange Presbytery, I wish to make this statement. This matter, if settled in a Christian spirit, may have some compensating values for the Chapel Hill Church and for the members of the Orange Presbytery. It may cause a self-examination by all the member churches with values to all. The Christian experience and programs of each church can, with interchange and understanding, bring spiritual values to the other churches.

We welcome the organization of another Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill of sincere men and women whose spiritual needs were not met in our crowded Church or by our minister.

Div. S.
285,1756
G7385

I.

SOME VALUES OF THE COMMISSION'S REPORT

Without acceptance by the Church of some of the Commission's findings, it is acknowledged by the Church that the studies and report of the Commission have some compensating values for the Chapel Hill Church. As a result of these studies, improvements have already been made in the observance of the rules, ritual and standard practices of our Church. It is acknowledged by us all that standard Church rules and practices are necessary for the orderly life and spiritual mission of the Church. The regular observance of religious forms, ceremonies and symbols is not only helpful but is often necessary for the meaningful expression and development of a deeper religious faith and life.

For example, our Lord's Supper has over the years been regularly observed by the Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church with a commemorative reverence and deep spiritual meaning to an increasingly large number of people. In the last few years when the growth of the congregation made it necessary to have Sunday services at 9:45 o'clock and 11 o'clock, communion has been served at the 9:45 o'clock service. Hereafter, communion will be served at both morning services. On New Year's Eve, Good Friday, and on several annual occasions the Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church, in cooperation with other churches, held communion services open to the members of all churches in the community without distinction of race. It is hoped that this will be continued.

In the case of baptism, I am informed that every child offered for baptism by the parents has been baptized. It is acknowledged that the ministers, officers and members should take more initiative with the parents for the baptism of the children of the church. More care should also be taken that unbaptized adult candidates be baptized for admission to the Church whether they be admitted by profession of faith or by letters from other churches.

Contrary to reports, the regular Church services, I can testify, even though I have mainly been out of the State for four years, have always been conducted with prayers. Also, the Church services have included and do include the Trinitarian Doxology and have been and are closed with the Trinitarian benediction. The financial records of the Church have been and are carefully kept and the student work, rather than being hurt by, has benefited from the total budget. There has been a needed improvement in the keeping of the records of the Church Sessions. Not only is there now a stricter observance of the ordinances and standard practices of the Presbyterian Church but also the systematic study of the Westminster Confession of Faith, instituted by Mr. Jones himself with the elders and deacons, has been intensified under the able and devoted leadership of our acting pastor, the Reverend Robert J. McMullen, whose Christianity has been compassionately expressed in decades of courageous ministry in China and tested by the rigors of months of confinement in a Japanese prison camp.

In this way the officers are receiving a more adequate knowledge of the doctrine of historic Presbyterianism as a basis for the ordination and installation of any unordained officers—without we trust an absolute uniformity in individual interpretation of all the 35 Articles of Faith.

It is well established that what we believe is a vital source of what we are and what we do. Basic doctrines are necessary for both the individual and the church as the organic and spiritual rootage of the tree of faith and life. If the soil from which the plant grows is too thin the plant succumbs to the passing storms or withers away in the heat of the day. If the tree and its branches be too narrowly confined and cut off from the generous and various freedom of sunshine, air and rain, the tree will fail to fulfill the richness of its life. The tree and its branches would fail to bear the fruit which its roots could sustain. Soil, sun, air and rain, trunk and branches, rootage and fruitage, are parts of the whole life of the tree. Scriptures, doctrines, individual interpretations, God and man,

love of God incarnate in Jesus Christ and love of people as neighbours and brothers, Christ's life, teachings, ministry, death and resurrection, the meaning of the cross, humility in confession of our sins against God and against our neighbours, repentance and God's forgiveness of our sins and our forgiveness of the trespasses against us, faith and works, the daily life, prayers and immortal hopes, all these and more are parts of the wholeness of the Christian religion and life. These are parts of the oneness of God in the universe, in the moral law, in the love of God incarnate in Jesus as the way, the truth and the life, and the hope of those who seek to love God with all their minds, souls and strength, and their neighbours as themselves.

These observations are an introduction to the consideration of (1) the faith of the Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill, (2) the significance of historic Presbyterianism, and (3) the values of our Chapel Hill Church and our minister, the Reverend Charles M. Jones. In the acknowledgement of the values of the Report of the Commission and of the Presbytery to the Chapel Hill Church, we should make clear that we will not retreat from the faith and programs based on the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all peoples for which Jesus lived, preached and gave His life.

II.

AN INTERPRETATION OF OUR FAITH

We believe in God revealed in the majesty and sweep of the universe, in the laws and beauty of nature, and in the moral sovereignty which undergirds the nature of man and the universe. We believe that the Bible is the progressive self-revelation of God in the spiritual strivings, the moral law, prophetic insights and profound experiences of a great people. We believe that Jesus Christ, the incarnation of Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Justice and Love, the Son of man and the Son of God, is the uniquely divine revelation of God in human life. Personally redemptive, socially regenerative, and spiritually creative in His life and meaning, He is the supreme fact in human history.

We humbly confess that we are sinners in the sight of God and that the way of Jesus is the way of salvation for our troubled selves and for the people of our troubled world. With all our human frailties and shortcomings, we seek with the prophet of old to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God and in the spirit of Jesus to love God with full reverence and our neighbours with full brotherhood.

We hold that the Presbyterian Church, while not the exclusive expression of Christianity, has a deep personal, spiritual, and historic meaning identified for us as a vital part of the personal, spiritual and historic meaning and mission of Christianity. With welcome to criticisms, we find in the Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church under our spiritually devout, personally humble, and selflessly dedicated minister, a Christ-centered Church devoted to the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, which transcend differences of race, color, class and doctrine. As Presbyterians, Christians and human beings, we struggle more and more to be true followers of Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life.

In a world, in which peace has been broken, freedom crushed

and human dignity degraded, under the combined assaults of Nazi-Nordic racialism, atheistic Communism, scientific-philosophic materialism, economic determinism, and religious fatalism, we would not exalt the sectarian differences which may divide us as sincere Christians in this imperiled world. Rather we would reverence the deeper spiritual meaning shining through the fundamentals of our religious faith and humane heritage which would unite us in the faith of our fathers living still and advancing in the prayers and hopes of their children. We would make known to the hungry, stricken and despairing peoples of the earth that the way of hope is not the way of totalitarian tyranny, subversion and hate, but is in the revolutionary spiritual and social dynamics of the gospel of the freedom and brotherhood of all the children of God.

In reverence we pray for a better world through the Ten Commandments, prophetic insights, our Lord's Prayer, His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, and His giving His all for all mankind. In humility, under God, Who is no respecter of persons, we work for the equal freedom, dignity, opportunity and peace of all human beings. We pray and work for the coming of the Kingdom of God, in the name and immortal spirit of Him who lived, taught, preached to the poor, fed the hungry, ministered to the sick of body and mind, suffered and died on the cross for the sins of men, triumphed over death and rose from the dead in spiritual power and, with the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, worketh for the saving of persons and for the saving of nations in the Fatherhood of one God and the brotherhood of all people.

III.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORIC PRESBYTERIANISM

The faith and mission of the Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill is a part of the faith and mission of Christianity, Protestantism, Calvinism, and historic Presbyterianism.

As people of the Book, we are grateful to the Jews for the belief in one God, the sovereignty of the moral law, the righteous indignation of the Hebrew prophets against personal and social injustice and evil, their spiritual insights and their challenge of righteousness, and for the greatest Book and the greatest Life, with their profound teachings and progressive revelations of God in the faith and experience of people.

As Christians we are grateful that the sackable City of Rome became the unsackable City of God and that the incarnation of the love of God in Jesus became the spiritual dynamic of the universal compassion for the redemption of all men. For this, the Catholic men and women of mission and mercy, as of old, by the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, still carry the cross far and near with its call to heroism in the giving and sharing of life. Despite its periods of asceticism and escape from the world, Christianity has made a unique contribution in combining with a deeply personal concern for the sacredness of the individual a wide social concern for the equal opportunity of all people in the commonwealth and in the world. Out of spiritual solitude into the midst of the world comes the Christian mission with disturbing, creative and saving power.

We share with the Protestantism of Luther the spiritual autonomy and freedom of the individual in direct communion with his God in his interpretation of the meaning and authority of the scriptures and the meaning and mission of Christ as above the authority of kings and bishops and the councils of men.

As Presbyterians we are a part of the Calvinism whose

vigorous currents from their headwaters in Geneva flowed into France, the Netherlands, Central Europe, Scotland, Britain, Ireland, America, the British Dominions and to the uttermost parts of the earth, robust in spiritual faith, moral force, and democratic power.

The interactions of Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism, Congregationalism, the Friends, the Baptists, the Methodists, the Moravians, the Disciples and other Reformed Faiths is part of the history of the Protestant Revolt and the Catholic Reformation. The Baptists were distant heirs of the 16th century Anabaptists and direct followers of Roger Williams, exiled from Calvinist Puritan Massachusetts to become a founder of Rhode Island and the champion of the separation of Church and State, the equal priesthood of believers, baptism by immersion and congregational autonomy. The Baptists and the Methodists, with some elements of Calvinism but different and unique in winning millions of people, became the two strongest Protestant denominations. John and Charles Wesley, loyal Anglicans, became founders of a dynamic Methodism and the leaders of the religious revival in America. As Swiss, as Huguenots, as Dutch and German Reformed, as Puritans in England, as Covenanters in Scotland, as Pilgrims, Puritans, Presbyterians and Reformed Churches in America and beyond the western seas, the Calvinists with all their shortcomings, wrote some of the most heroic chapters in the history of Protestantism and in the rise of freedom and democracy in the modern world. The Dutch Calvinists wrote one of the most heroic chapters in the history of liberty. Plymouth Rock became one of the cornerstones of self government in America.

To the City of John Calvin went John Knox of Scotland. From Geneva John Knox carried the Reformation to Scotland, where the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart and the men of St. Andrews had prepared the way. He founded the Scottish Presbyterian Church with (1) its emphasis on the omnipotent and omniscient sovereignty of God, the doctrines of justification by faith, predestination, and salvation through personal repentance and the redeeming

power of Jesus Christ, the incarnation of a just and merciful God; (2) its moral thunder against the abuse of the power of kings and bishops; and (3) its democratic repercussions throughout the English speaking world. Switzerland and Holland, little lands, became the homes of great peoples. John Knox was influenced by Luther and Melancthon of Germany, Calvin, Zwingli and Farel of Switzerland, Coligny of France, and Hamilton and Wishart of Scotland.

In the Presbyterian Church the lay people shared equally with the ministers in the government of the Church in the local congregation, in the Presbytery, in the Synod, and in the General Assembly. The Church with all its local autonomy was, as is yet, under the governance of a majority of the representatives of all the churches of the regional Presbytery; the Presbyteries, under the Synod; and the Presbyteries and Synods under the General Assembly of the representatives of all the Presbyteries. This federalism in church organization made a contribution to federalism in political government.

In the midst of the Puritan Revolution an Assembly of Divines met at Westminster with some representation of the laity and the universities to draw up a statement of faith. The sessions lasted from 1643 to 1647. During those years was hammered out with prayer and thought the Westminster Confession of Faith of 33 Articles which have since, with some revisions and the addition of 2 Articles, been the creed of the Presbyterian Churches. The several revisions have eliminated from the Confession of Faith the dogmatic statements that the Pope is anti-Christ, that Roman Catholics are idolaters, that a Presbyterian is forbidden to marry a Catholic and that unbaptized infants are subject to infant damnation. In the revisions the wrath of God has been more balanced with the love of God. The Confession of Faith has never claimed to be the final and infallible statement of faith. It is to be noted that Calvin himself said that the doctrine of predestination was a labyrinth from which it was difficult to disentangle the human mind. Presbyterian leaders have said that the doctrine of predestination should not preclude the moral responsibility and

the free will of the individual and that justification by faith needs to be tested by good works.

The officers of the Presbyterian Church have been engaged in a study of the Sections of the Thirty-Five Articles of the Confession of Faith for the better understanding of the Presbyterian faith and as a preparation for the subscription to the system of doctrines contained in the Confession by those officers as yet unordained.

On this basis in no church will the ordination of officers be a matter of more sincere consideration. If any of the unordained officers find that they cannot, in good conscience, subscribe, any self-elimination will not be a reproach but will give the sincere meaning of both knowledge and faith to the actual ordination. There is a feeling that, along with our own confessed faults, some of the officers were not ordained because our minister is above all a man of the spirit and because some of the officers felt the lack of adequate knowledge and spiritual understanding of the Articles of the Confession of Faith. It is realized that, though the spiritual ordination is deep in the heart, the vital outward expression strengthens the inner experience. The present study of the Confession of Faith by the officers may overcome this lack and prepare them for ordination.

I must say that in subscribing, during my own ordination some years ago, I subscribed in general to the system of doctrine and not with a sense of the absolutism of uniformity in the interpretation of all of the 179 sections in the 35 Articles.

IV.

SOME SPIRITUAL VALUES OF THE CHAPEL HILL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND THE MINISTER, THE REVEREND CHARLES M. JONES

Though we cannot accept all the findings of the Commission, we are grateful that actual shortcomings have been pointed out. The officers and the ministers have made needed improvements in the procedures of our Church. These acknowledgements and improvements, we wish to emphasize, in no way indicate a retreat but rather indicate an advance on the whole wide front of the faith, program and life of the Church. From this fundamental faith in the meaning of Christianity comes the disturbance of our own social conscience and the wider acceptance of the Christian conceptions of human brotherhood and of the conditions of life, labor, health, and the well being of people here and everywhere.

Conscious of our many faults we stand together on the great religious fundamentals and the spiritual purpose of our Church and its ministry. We wish you could know more of our minister, his faith, his life, ministry and personal work with individual people day and night through the years.

A. MR. JONES' LIFE AND MINISTRY

In the course of the days and weeks of the year's ministry Mr. Jones seeks to help young people and old struggling with the problems of life and faith. Sometimes he helps to save a marriage which seems about to go on the rocks, an alcoholic winning a new mastery over the scourge of drink, a person in a depression about the worth of living, a student about to drop out of college because of failure and despair, a paralytic who wants companionship and transportation. He opens the church rooms to groups of students from neighbouring institutions who want to discuss their problems and hopes, including the relation of the races, of economic groups and of nations in our

fearful modern world, all in a constructive Christian spirit.

Young people come troubled about the impact of science on their religious beliefs. They are perplexed by the fact that in a number of historic cases, leaders of the church had condemned as anti-Christian and atheistic (1) the Copernican theory of the revolution of the earth around the sun, (2) the science of geology which revealed an earth millions of years old, and (3) the theory of evolution and the descent of man from lower species. Mr. Jones, himself a scientist and engineer as well as a minister, as I understand him, makes clear to them that the Bible is not a work of science but a work of religion, that the authors of the books of the Bible were none the less inspired as prophets of God in their spiritual insights however much they expressed their spiritual faith, experiences, problems and hopes in the language of the people and in the context of the known world of the times in which they lived; that God is inclusive of all science, that there is no conflict between the spiritual conception of the Rock of Ages and the geologic conception of the ages of the rocks, and that along with the knowledge of the biological descent of man from lower species should go the knowledge of the spiritual ascent of man toward God as revealed in the incarnation of God in Jesus as the way, the truth and the life.

Mr. Jones helps young minds to grapple with the problems of science and religion, doubt and faith, Christianity and materialism, temptations of the body, of pride, popularity and power, and helps them effectually in their adventurous quest for more real religion, deeper faith, and a higher life. He is on call by those in need day and night through the weeks and years of his ministry in Chapel Hill. Many are the unnumbered and even unremembered acts of faith and guidance, kindness and love of this good man's life and his ministry in Chapel Hill. His sermons are full of the love of man and the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ, as the supreme revelation of God, meet the search of God for man and the search of man for God, at once the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, wholly human and wholly divine.

Under his ministry the Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church has grown in numbers and in spiritual influence. The Church school, the women's church organizations and the student work led by Mr. and Mrs. George Worth, are part of the life of a Christian fellowship dynamic in the lives of people and in the life of the community. Mr. and Mrs. Worth are soon to go to be teachers in a Presbyterian school in the Near East.

B. THE CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHARLES JONES

If the careful observance of the ordinances and rules of the Presbyterian Church, if the systematic study of the Westminster Confession of Faith as the basis for the ordination and installation of these officers who are yet to be ordained, if the statement of faith made by the minister and by the officers and upheld by a large majority of the congregation, if these altogether do not meet the situation then there is something more than doctrine, rules and ritual behind the situation.

The fact emerges that the minister, the officers and the congregation are the real fundamentalists on the most fundamental commandments and statements of faith by Jesus Himself. The doctrines about Jesus, important as they are, should not be exalted above the doctrines of Jesus. Militancy in behalf of the doctrines about Jesus should not be an escape of a lack of deep concern for the doctrines of Jesus or a cover for spiritual exclusiveness, vested privilege and un-Christian discrimination and exploitation.

Our minister takes literally the doctrines of Jesus. In this he is moved by a "divine discontent" which disturbs the complacency of much of the Christian Church and is a challenge to much that is un-Christian in our lives and in our society. Our minister takes literally the fundamental doctrines that God is no respecter of persons; that we should not kill but rather seek to help our fellows, that we should love God with all our being and our neighbors as ourselves, that God is the Father not of some but of all of mankind; that we should not only reverently say "Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ," but that we

should with real faith take up our cross and follow Him. If we Christians really took up our cross and followed Him, there would be enough power in the Church to transform our sinful selves, our un-Christian society and our broken world. We would redirect the springs of Fascism and Communism, with their tyranny, subversion and hate, into streams of reverence and brotherhood, freedom and democracy. We would advance against irreligion, poverty, hunger, illiteracy, discriminations, injustice and hate upon which feed the totalitarian threats of the police state to our religious faith, our humane heritage and our historic freedom. Fascism and Communism feed their monstrous power on un-Christian conditions in our modern world. Religion and education must first prepare the patient way in the minds and hearts of the people for our acceptance of the law of God becoming in time the ways of men and the laws of states. The more Christian the spirit in the hearts of the people in our beloved land the less dynamic the appeal of totalitarian promises to people everywhere. While we wisely produce and rearm in the defense of freedom against aggression and tyranny let us, under the banner of Christ, take up His cross and launch the spiritual offensive for freedom, justice, and brotherhood.

In preaching the gospel to the poor and all who come, in ministering to the crippled of body or mind, the bewildered, publicans and sinners, the lost sheep, the prodigal son, those outside the pale in prison, in Samaria, or across the tracks or at the other end of town, Mr. Jones, in ministering to the least of these our brethren, has "done it unto Him." When he says "Lord, Lord" or when he doesn't say very much with words but simply answers to the call of desperate need in the spirit of Christ more than in the language of dogma, we have the Biblical assurance that he will not be unheard by the unseen ears of Him who laid down the great doctrine of Love, that He and the Father are one and that they who love God and their neighbour are His brethren.

In his Christian spirit, Mr. Jones, without being a party to the project but with instant action upon learning of the hazards:

of the situation, several years ago took into his home as a refuge from threats of violence, inter-state and state bus travelers of both races who were testing the law requiring separate seats. Also our Church has not closed any of its doors or any of its pews to any human being who has come in quest of religion, light and brotherhood. The large majority of the Church upheld him in this position despite an unfortunate loss of a considerable number of members. The officers in 1944 stated the position of the Church as follows:

“(1) We agree that the pastor in order to serve effectively must have freedom of conscientious judgment and action in attempting to respond in the Spirit of Christ to the concrete situations which confront him as he goes about his sacred calling.

“(2) We agree that this Church should not fail to manifest a vocal and active concern and leadership in behalf of justice and goodwill in the relations between all the races, creeds, and classes of mankind. This obligation is especially binding in regard to the inter-racial relations of our own community and doubly imperative in these years of racial persecutions and racial tensions.

“(3) This Church has not encouraged and does not encourage Negroes to desert their own churches for membership or worship in this Church. On the other hand, we do not close our doors or discriminate against or receive with aught but the spirit of Christian brotherhood any sincere worshipper who may present himself.

“(4) The officers of this Church openly acknowledge the responsibility of the Church to stand for the economic, educational, political, social and religious progress of all peoples regardless of race, color or creed. As law-abiding citizens we have due regard for the laws of the State and the public policies of the people. We are conscious of the need for intelligent, gradual adjustments to new situations. We do have a long-range sense of the responsibility of the Christian Church for leading the people in a gradually widening religious communion of the Church Universal. We pray God for the wisdom

and the spirit which in these perplexing times will not alienate but win the people.”

Mr. Jones has been denounced, villified, his home once stoned and the safety of his family threatened, but no word of bitterness has crossed his lips or those of his loyal and courageous wife. Rather they have expressed only thoughts of understanding of those who misunderstand him. He can take it. If any of us have suffered more for the religion of Jesus Christ than Charlie Jones let him cast the first vote against him.

In the worldwide struggle for the loyalties and souls of men between Christianity and the spiritual forces of freedom on the one side, and totalitarianism and tyranny on the other side, Charles Jones is in the front lines as an evangelist of Jesus Christ, preaching and ministering, humbly, joyously and unafraid. In correcting his and our faults let us not strike him down. Repentance for shortcomings in our observance of the rules and rituals must not cause any recanting or retreat in basic faith and programs. Presbyterian Christianity, as Reverend R. J. McMullen would say, means redemption, not condemnation.

This position of the Church is in keeping with the official statement made weekly for years in the Bulletin of the Church as follows:

“To all who are weary and need rest, to all who mourn and need comfort, to all who are lonely and need friendship, to all who are complacent and need disturbing, to all who sin and need a Savior, to all who are glad and would serve their fellow men, this Church opens wide its doors and bids you welcome.

“Leave not this Church without a prayer for yourself, your friends, and all who worship here; for the coming of God’s world-wide Kingdom of justice and peace; for the fellowship of the Christian Church universal among all nations and races; and for men and women of every faith who sincerely desire one human family under the Fatherhood of one God.

“Our bond is a seeking of the mind of Christ and the will of God for our lives and the life of the world.

“We aim to be sincere and genuine. The lives we exhibit to the world shall not be for show or the approval of man, but a spontaneous expression of our inmost feelings.

“We aim to have toward others unqualified good will. As God sends His mercies on the just and unjust, we will show our good will to the grateful and the ungrateful, the friendly and unfriendly.

“We will have absolute confidence in God. Our faith consists not in conforming to ritual nor in intellectual assent to a creed, but a serene experience of our fellowship with the Unseen God revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Giving ourselves primarily to seeking His will on earth, we can be confident about lesser matters.

“When we fall short, we seek penitently the gracious forgiveness of God and rely confidently on His help. We strive to continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ Jesus.”

With all our shortcomings as Presbyterians and Christians, our minister, our officers and our congregation, as clearly pointed out by Reverends George Edwards, John Ensign, William Currie, John Redhead, and R. Murphy Williams, among others, stand together steadfast in our faith and program for the reformation of ourselves and for the coming of the Kingdom of God. We thank God that Reverend Charles M. Jones ministers through the Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill in the name and in the spirit of Jesus Christ, Son of man and Son of God, Redeemer and Savior, Who brings to people everywhere in our fearful world the glad tidings of the Fatherhood of one God and the brotherhood of all people.



D02606014J



Duke University Libraries