"WHAT THE CHURCH EXPECTS OF ELON"
By Rev. Wm. T. Scott

Elon College was created by and for the Church. Therefore any program of the College should be closely related to the great purpose and need of the Church. The function of the Church is to win people to faith in Jesus Christ and to the acceptance of Him as their personal Saviour; to train people so that their lives will be enriched and dedicated to the service of God and man; to extend the individual and corporate Christian life into society so that the Christian spirit may be felt and practiced. The function of education fostered by the Church should lead to the discovery and application of truth. "To think is the symbol of manhood; to think clearly, creatively, is the mark of the superior man." To think clearly, creatively, altruistically, and to dedicate those thoughts to Christian ends, is the mark of the Christian man. Here is the purpose of Christian higher education through Elon College. Here is the hope of the world!

Elon, as a Christian College, exists to help the Church fulfil a religious mission, which can be accomplished only when people are educated (trained) in "knowledge, in skills, in habits, in interests, in beliefs, " and who can be committed to take an active part in the Church, and through the Church to serve society. This is a Christian mission just as truly as any mission action of the Church can be - - be it in China, in Virginia, or in North Carolina. The Christian College, therefore, is essentially an instrument of the Christian movement. It must seek as its primary service to prepare young men and young women to become lay and professional leaders in this movement, both in the churches and in community life. The best test of the value of a college is to what extent that institution helps to fit young men and young women for the practical duties of life. A Christian college diploma is designed and should be a certificate of Christian character as well as scholarship, said the eminent Horace Mann, first President of Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

The Churches expect Elon, therefore, to be the inspiration and leader of progress in religious thinking and dedication. There must be such a close relationship with the Churches that there will cease to be "a leak at the top", as Dean Matthews put it a while ago. Often we ask the question, "Why is it that young people who are leaders at home go away to college and when they return they are not interested in the Church?" Our brightest young men and young women go to college and it is expected that they will return eager for leadership in the Christian venture. To our sorrow, large numbers return to us uninterested. Something happens to their religion while at college! (these statements are not made in condemnation of Elon but as a general fact, and it will be seen later on that at our own College we have a chance and responsibility to correct any part of the truth as it might apply to Elon.)

Freshmen enter college with a simple faith. When they graduate, many of them have lost that faith and no adequate philosophy takes its place. We may account for some of this, and the fault is not all with the colleges. The church

The church back at home must take its share of the blame and try to correct it. The student leaving home for college finds a different atmosphere existing at the college from that which he has experienced at home. Too many of our local churches have been afraid of truth and have kept their youth "in the dark" on great scientific, social and religious issues, and when liberation comes there is little foundation for courageous and clear thinking to match the scientific and fearless investigation of the college classroom. Perhaps over half of these young people have been active leaders in the church and larger community interests back at home. They participated in worship, Sunday School, Boy Scouts, etc., During college they sit and listen and are ministered unto. "Four years of religious inactivity are hard to overcome, for the laws of atrophy are universal laws." Then there are other factors, of course, such as competitive pressure of curricular and extra-curricular activities. Highly educated professors of science, literature, sociology, etc., are anxious for students to take their courses and join some departmental club. Religious abilities are often unguided, leadership opportunities are few, and religion ceases to become particularly thrilling. The Church back at home does not keep in touch with these youth, and they simply act as any who are neglected or who neglect the religious side and loyalties of life. The result is that these same fine young people who went away from us are not "equipped in knowledge, in skills, in habits, in desire to undertake leadership." The average pastor knows all too well how difficult it is even to get high school and elementary public school teachers to teach a Sunday School Class!

The Church has a right to expect that Elon working with the churches can and will correct these difficulties - as far as they exist - and somehow help the Church to receive these young people back dedicated to the responsibilities of Christian citizenship. These matters are within the reach of our correction at Elon, for Elon is ours and we can help determine its policies. That is a big reason why we ought to support Elon by sending our youth there and by making substantial financial gifts to it.

As to the program which the churches expect of Elon College, an article printed in Volume V, No. 7 of "The Journal of Christian Education" published some years ago by the Department of Christian Education of the General Christian Convention expresses the opportunity and obligation of the Christian college to the churches far better than the writer could hope to do, and he quotes it:

"Denominational colleges are fast realizing that they cannot justify their existence unless they do more than independent and tax supported institutions. If they are simply to duplicate the work of these institutions, they have no excuse for being . . . The next step for the colleges in religious education is threefold in its content: First, The Curriculum. The Church college cannot be satisfield with merely providing a religious atmosphere for instruction in what we call, for lack of a better term, the secular branches. These branches must be taught and the atmosphere in which they are taught must be religious, which is to say that Christian teachers must be employed as faculty members, but this does not meet the full obligation that rests upon the curriculum of the Church college. Its

curriculum must include specific instruction in Bible and religious education so that the Church may have trained leaders for its pulpits and for its pews. These leaders must know religion as experience and be able to interpret experience in spiritual terms. They must know religion as a working rule and they must know also that it is an enrichment of civilization past and present. Religion must be thought of in our Christian colleges as a quality of every course in the curriculum and not as a quantity of information to be transmitted.

"The founding fathers of Elon College devoutly believed that. So long as there shall be need for a spiritual interpretation of the facts of history, of science and of life, just so long will there be need for Christian education, with its ability to transform the powers of a man and to refashion them, so that every act and thought and aspiration of those who are truly educated will reflect the beautiful principles which we have learned to call Christian.

"Secondly, Laboratory Facilities. The denominational colleges cannot content themselves in the future with courses in Bible and religious education as meeting fully their obligation for moral leaders for the Church and Kingdom. If it is necessary to have laboratory facilities in chemistry and other natural sciences, in domestic science and art, in psychology, and in the field of general education, it is likewise necessary to have similar facilities in the field of Christian education. So the day is dawning, when these colleges will call upon their constituencies to provide them ample faculty and facilities for labor to work in Christian Education."

Elon College has the distinction of being the first college in America to erect on its campus a laboratory of religious education in which students may be given definite training and experience as superintendents and teachers in Sunday Schools and workers in other Church auxiliaries. Because of financial difficulties this ideal began so nobly more than 20 years ago has had to be curtailed in recent years to the detriment of our churches of the Convention. We now have an excellent opportunity now of reviving and extending it by under-writing the Staley-Atkinson-Newman Foundation for Christian Education for $100,000.00. With these facilities and funds Elon College can and will contribute more largely to our churches both in professional and lay leaders.

In the functioning of this department of Christian Education at Elon it does not seem too much to expect that the college would offer classroom courses in religion and seminar courses to advanced students. These seminar groups could, under the direction of the professor in charge, go on deputation teams to groups of churches for a week for the purpose of conducting leadership training courses to the great help of all concerned. The department should also offer special counsel and direction, giving college credit to accredited students who pursue this type of service, Vacation Bible Schools, etc., during the summer vacation. Special guidance should be given to advanced ministerial college students who might serve as student pastors or to young men and young women who serve as student assistants in churches. This department

should be closely related to the department of music, sociology etc., and even the business department, and it should be an undergirding influence for the entire student life.

To continue the article in "The Journal of Christian Education". - The third item in the next step for the Christian college in religious education is found in the realm of Vocational Guidance. Vocational guidance in the Church college cannot safely be separted from religious motivation. The work in the department of Bible and Religious Education must be integrated with the vocational guidance of students in colleges. Religion is acknowledged to be the integrating force, the unifying influence for all the interests, purposes, and ideals of life. Consequently it will be disastrous for the Church colleges if they should leave the matter of vocational guidance of their student to outside agencies, or if they unfortunately separate their institutional efforts along this line from their work in Bible and Religious Education."

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