

Commencement '56

## SAMUEL MCCREA CAVERT

Mr. President, I have the honor to present as a candidate for an honorary degree the Reverend Samuel McCrea Cavert. Educated in the liberal arts tradition, he holds the degree of Bachelor of Arts *summa cum laude* in classics, the degree of Master of Arts in philosophy, and the degree of Bachelor of Divinity *summa cum laude*. His academic distinction was further recognized by his election to Phi Beta Kappa at Union College, and by his appointment to a travelling fellowship from Union Theological Seminary. Ordained a minister of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., he began his professional career in education; but it was ecclesiastical statesmanship rather than academic scholarship to which his life was to be given. For nearly forty years his name has been synonymous with the growing movement toward the cooperative unity of Protestantism. For thirty-one years he served on the secretariat of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ, the last twenty of those years as executive head of the Council. In 1950 he was elected the first general secretary of the new National Council of the Churches of Christ, which merged the functions of the Federal Council with several other inter-church agencies. More than any other single individual, Samuel McCrea Cavert has been the architect of the united efforts of American Protestantism. But his vision of cooperative Christianity has extended far beyond the boundaries of this country. A participant in world ecumenical councils since 1924, he assisted in drawing the first formal plan for a World Council of Churches; and it was he who suggested that name for the organization which was ultimately to unite 150 independent Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox communions from forty-two countries. As chairman of arrangements for the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Amsterdam in 1948, he saw in the permanent establishment of the Council the fruition of long labor. Since 1954 he has served as its executive secretary in the United States. He has been honored by appointment to important governmental commissions, by invitation to distinguished American lectureships, and by honorary degrees from colleges and universities in this country and in Europe. Ecumenical leader, preacher, lecturer, author, scholar, Samuel McCrea Cavert has had a central role in the creation of what has been called "the great new fact of our time," the world Christian community. Therefore, on behalf of the Faculty of Kalamazoo College, I recommend that upon him be conferred the honorary degree, Doctor of Divinity.