

THE SEMINARIAN

Published by the Society of Inquiry at Lancaster Theological Seminary

Lancaster, Pennsylvania

3 May, 1950

REFLECTIONS OF A LIBRARIAN

Given opportunity for a brief word in this issue of THE SEMINARIAN, I should like to say just three things about the Library.

I. The Library offers opportunity. Here is a sizeable collection of books on themes related to our work of preparation for the Gospel ministry. Books can help you do four things.

1. Books can help you to get facts, data, immediately useful ideas. You have a report to make, a term paper to prepare, a sermon to preach. YOU come in with a recommended bibliography, and you go out with statistics, bits of information, a text, an illustration - maybe a whole sermon!

2. Books - and some better than others - can help you to know truth. It is the Holy Spirit who guides us into truth, and He often guides us through books. What is true to Christ, and what is alien to His spirit? What lifts the mind to higher levels, widens our conceptions and deepens our perceptions?

3. Books can help us to know man. We are here to study theology, not anthropology - most especially not the anthropology of the Hooten type. St. John in Revelation saw an angel measuring the wall of the New Jerusalem in cubits "according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel". That must always be the pastor's foot-rule.

4. Books can help us to know men. I have a feeling that the "H" section is a neglected area in our Library. It deals with biography, and it is too seldom visited, if the slips tell a story. But even better than what men have written about other men - and they tell some entrancing tales - is what men have written of themselves into their books. The reader will often "have a pleasurable sense that he is in contact with personalities and not printed pages, with minds and not dry documents." Very close friends can be met in books.

In These Restless Heads (P.192 ff.) James Brance Cabell has a passage which I love. "That which the dead once saw I am then privileged to see, very much as when upon clear evenings I observe the light which shone upon Altair or Sirius ever so many thousands of years before we arose from the supper table. The dark magic that men name reading enables whosoever will to pass with long ago entombed companions about Troy or Iceland or Calvary We are illuded thus handsomely, and very dreadfully, in the while that our lungs move with long perished laughter and our eyes brim with tears of the dead."

II. The Library extends a privilege. There are faces about our Library walls, the former professors who taught here. But then there are names too--graven in wood, etched in brass - of people whose thoughtful generosity made possible the wider and more ancient teaching that awaits you within the covers of the books. Sometimes lift your eyes to the names and say a Requiescat for these men and women whose debtors we remain.

III. Finally, the Library requires an obligation. It is essentially a co-operative enterprise. Most especially is this true of such a self-service library as ours, with but one librarian in charge, and the important departments of the reference and periodical rooms without attendants. We lose too many books and magazines. Others besides students use our facilities, I know. But there is generally some mortality among books on reference shelves, and magazine files are sadly broken. This is largely carelessness and neglect, but the effect remains unchanged.

I have been dipping into the records of the Society of Inquiry, which goes back practically to the beginnings of our Seminary. Long before there was a periodical room in a library, the Society had a reading room with the current periodicals. One of the officers was the librarian, but later he was given the more resounding title of Charta Phylax - you see, they studied Greek in those days. He was the Guardian of the Papers - Phylax is the word used in Acts 5:23, which AV renders keepers (exactly what we are deprecating) and which RSV renders sentinels, which is better in this connection. Each student a Charta Phylax is our need.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter": know our books, use our books, love our books, return our books.

Dr. Stonesifer

CLASS OF '51 TO PURCHASE CREDENCE BRACKET AND ALMS BASIN FOR CHAPEL

At a meeting of the Middler Class on Monday afternoon, it was decided by unanimous vote that class funds be invested in memorial credence bracket and alms basin for use in Santee Chapel. Dr. Sayres has been instructed by the class to make arrangements with the offices of the Heidelberg Press for delivery of these pieces of chancel furnishing at the earliest possible date, in hopes that they will be here for dedication at the annual Spring Communion Service, Wednesday, May 10.

AS I SEE IT . . .

The long history of human thought has impressed us with many things. It is with awe that we consider the sheer weight of Man's speculation. But one of the most interesting tendencies is the tendency for our species to categorize, to reduce experience to a single formula. As Kant has pointed out, we take sensual data from the Phenomenal world and impose upon them the categories that render them intelligible to us. Our search for unity in experience has led us to many varying philosophies -- monism, dualism, pluralism, idealism, materialism, realism, pragmatism, etc. All seek to bring the data of experience under a single formula.

Although such intellectual exercise proves stimulating and interesting, it also tends to give rise to a certain fallacy in our views. We are prone to fall under such an influence to the extent that we categorize everything. We view a certain group and tend to place them in a row of neat pigeonholes, allowing no individual variations. The rise of social philosophies in recent years has tended to make us lose sight of the individual and turn our eyes upon the class. We look at a member of a group and expect a prescribed point-of-view. In a fascinating essay "Are Women Human?" Dorothy Sayers laments the most venerable of classifications -- that which sets men and women apart as two vastly differing species. She draws a sharp line of distinction between specialized knowledge and specialized point-of-view. A few excellent lines quoted here might well carry the weight of her argument: "But there are other questions -- as for example, about literature or finance -- on which the 'woman's point-of-view' has no value at all. In fact, it does not exist. No special knowledge is involved, and a woman's opinion on literature and finance is valuable only as the judgment of an individual. I am occasionally desired by congenital imbeciles and the editors of magazines to say something about the writing of detective fiction 'from the woman's point-of-view'. To such demands, one can only say, 'Go away and don't be silly. You might as well ask what is the female angle on an equilateral triangle.'"

We all know that one of the means for determining the value of a given stone is the number of facets cut on its face. Furthermore, by no difficult trick of logic, we can pursue our argument one step further and say that experience is interesting in direct proportion to the multiplicity of its aspects. The heat of summer receives its primary attraction in contrast to

the discomfort of the winter's cold. Night receives its enchantment when contrasted to the enervating brilliance of daylight. Industrial psychologists work overtime discovering ways in which the monotony of assembly line experience can be varied enough to remove the stigma of automaton existence from factory work. If life is to be interesting and worthwhile, there must be a certain diversity to experience.

It is now well nigh time that we reverse our policy of regimentation and give some profound thought to the development of the consciousness of the individual. We cannot allow ourselves to be reduced constantly in our thinking to the rigid classifications of sex, race, nationality, and ideology. We must allow for individuality in point of view. A woman must not be expected to act like a woman, a Negro like a Negro, a Republican like a Republican, a German like a German, and a Lutheran like a Lutheran. There is no reason why all doctors, lawyers, and ministers should think alike.

We are endowed by our creator with a certain amount of freedom within limitations. This is self-evident. And therefore we must judge individuals only as individuals, not according to our various standard preconceptions.

Dave Mark

FINAL MEETING OF SOCIETY OF INQUIRY

On May 2, the last meeting of the Society of Inquiry for 1949-50 was held at 6:15 in the lounge, President Earl Marks presiding.

The main item of business for consideration was the election of officers for next school year. Spirit was good and there was competition for all offices except one -- that of secretary-treasurer. That office Ruthie Muthard won by acclamation.

For the presidency Messrs. Delp, Masters, and M. Gerhart were nominated. Mr. Delp was elected. The vice presidency was contested among Messrs. Haney, Sink, and Masters. Mr. Haney was elected.

Other business preceding the elections was centered in the disposal of the budget balance from this year, as well as the offering from the Fall Communion and the W.S.S.F. Fund. It was decided to designate the Communion offering for the I.C.U. The balance for charity appeals at the discretion of Dr. Sayce. Stan Dunn proposed an old clothes drive for this spring, clothes to be sent directly to Japan.

The meeting was closed with a rising vote of thanks to the retiring president for a job well done. Mr. Marks expressed the hope that co-operation will be as fine next year as it was in the school year just passed.