

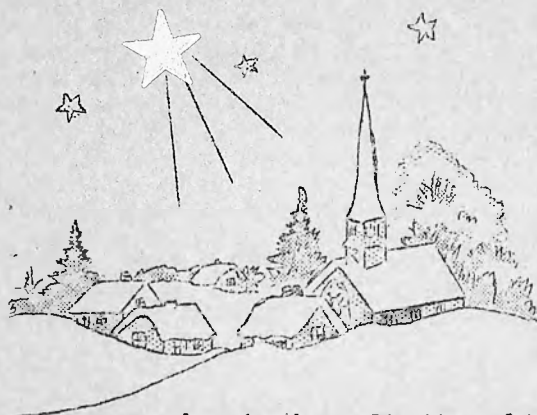
THE SEMINARIAN

Published monthly by the Society of Inquiry
Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.

DECEMBER 1945

GREETINGS FROM THE

EDITORIAL STAFF



In a few days we will be celebrating the first peacetime Christmas since 1940. Yet even with the cessation of hostilities grave fears and doubts hang over us, for there is little evidence of hope for real peace within the near future. Civil war, strikes, the hunger which is stalking Europe -- all lend a note of seriousness to this Christmas season. To the world the song of the angels sounds a sour note -- to the church it brings a challenge of the work which is to be

done in the application of the Christian ethic to world affairs.

Particularly as ministers, every festival of the Christian Church should be translated into an active practical application to life-situations, as well as being a formal, liturgical celebration. The Christmas season is no exception. We have the responsibility of preaching the hope and promise of "peace on earth, goodwill toward men" to the world, of preaching the significance of Christmas -- Son of God, the revelation of the Father. Christmas is the Christian's heritage. Thus we can rejoice in the peace and hope which is ours through Christ.

Herb Reichert, Editor

The Staff wishes all of you a very merry Christmas holiday.

A CHRISTMAS GIFT THAT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Dick Rubright

This winter millions of people in Europe and Asia will be waging a grim battle. It will be a fight for their very existence -- a fight against hunger and disease, against cold and want and despair. And many of them are going to fight a losing battle -- are going to die a pitiful and agonizing death simply because, in some areas, there will not be enough shelter and clothing, enough food and medical supplies to fulfill the desperate needs of the populace. Try for a moment to visualize the predicament of these people in concrete terms. Here is a war widow with three children. Her husband is gone and their home and household belongings have been reduced to a heap of rubble and ashes. If they are fortunate they live in a single bare room that a friend has provided for them. They have no income, since local industries are demolished and there is no work available; and the mother must look after her children. Their wardrobe consists of the clothing they have on their backs, tattered and ragged and little protection against the cold. Their wooden shoes they have made themselves. And now clothing is out of the

(Cont. next page)



Beliefs and convictions concerning essentials in any religion are seldom uniform and definitely prescribed. Room must always be left for conceptions to suit the idiosyncrasies of the individual believer.

But we are thinking now not so much of the privileges of the individual believer as of the privileges and responsibilities of the Christian Minister. And Christian ministers are obliged to have more in common than do mere Christian believers. And even more so is this the case when one thinks of ministers of a particular denomination. Here it is not too much to expect more or less of a common faith. What, then, should a minister of our branch of the Protestant faith believe about Jesus?

The answer to this perplexing question is not specifically prescribed by either a constitution or a confession of faith. For these, however ardently adopted or affirmed, are always subject to various interpretations. So that the answer given by anyone reflects more or less his own convictions. This article, at least, is to be considered as an expression of what the writer considers to be basic in a minister's belief about Jesus.

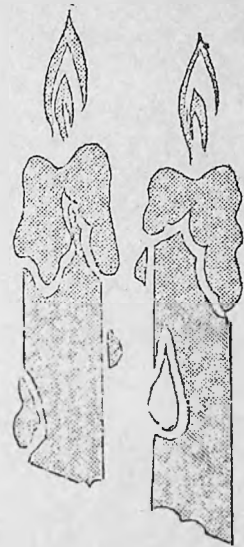
First of all, we ministers must believe in Jesus. That was the first name by which he was known, and we should know him as Jesus. This means that we believe him to have been a real man. He was flesh as we are flesh. He lived his life as other human beings live their lives on earth. But what a life it was! Because of it men saw fit to honor him with names and titles not appropriate to other men. The man Jesus was so unique that he won for himself very distinctive honors and confessions of faith and devotion. The least a Christian minister can do is to point to the human Jesus and say with holy admiration, "Behold the Man!"

But that is not enough. Many of his own day and multitudes since through faith and experience have seen in him elements that make him more than man. They saw, to say the least, a manifestation of God in him, a manifestation that made them fall down before him in reverence and with an attitude of worship. They found in him the answer to the quest of the soul expressed by Philip when he said "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us". They found in him the clearest expression of the Divine Being who alone can satisfy the longings of the heart of man. And so they called him the Son of God. This a minister should see in him today. He should be ready to acknowledge with the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews that he is "the effulgence of God's glory and the express image of His person."

But one belief or conviction of this kind simply leads to another. Having gone thus far in our belief we must necessarily go one step farther and call him Lord. His knowledge of man and his likeness to God make him the supreme director of life. He not only knows the way God wants man to live but also how man can so live. And therefore for us, as for those in his day, he teaches as one with authority. His word becomes law for us. We are bound to call him Lord and find delight in doing his bidding. Nothing short of this befits the faith of a Christian minister.

But is this all? No. Man is not satisfied with seeing a perfect man, and a clear manifestation of God, and having commandments and directions for the right way of life. He wants all this, but he wants more. He wants a helper, a power not his own that will stand by him when his own will and his own strength may fail him. In short, he wants a Savior. And this is exactly what men have found this God-man to be. His work as Savior may take a variety of forms, too varied indeed to be discussed in a brief article. But Savior men have always found him to be. He promised this from the beginning of his ministry when he called his first disciples and said to them "I will make you fishers of men". He offered himself as the

(continued on page 5)



In an ever narrowing space of time you and I will have been commissioned to go forth into an era of crisis to join the forces of those now endeavoring to reconcile man to God. If we fail, Tonybee's list of defunct civilizations will lengthen by one.

Thanks to the atomic bomb, national pride, the lack of a true "Weltanschauung", and a host of other un-Christian spirits, we lay at death's door. This leads us to the remarkable insight that mankind is still sick. But no one is capable of diagnosing and healing that sickness unless he has first sought to comprehend the nature of man, the only creature who is a problem to himself.

In Jesus Christ the true nature of mankind is revealed to us so that by comparison to his spirit, his motives, his teachings, and his life, mankind is still sinful even in the light of its achievements. Brethren, before God our righteousness is as but filthy rags.

There are those who hold up before our eyes the fact that man has been created in the image of God. They speak of the spark of the divine in all of us, attempt to drive home the idea that in the spirit of Jesus even the sinner is of infinite worth, and hold to the thesis that we are created with equal potentialities for good and evil.

Yet the Bible nowhere gives an interpretation of the image of God. Having been created in this image does not make us more "godly". It means that God has given us the capacity to live in communion with him by endowing us with the faculties required for this purpose. We cannot know truth unless we first have the capacity to understand it.

Nor does possessing "a spark of the divine" make us any the less sinners. Through this "spark" we may know what sin is like and be enabled to discern sins in our own life, but it does not guarantee that we will adhere to sin. We are no less the sinner for the "spark". "Semper justus - semper peccator". The conviction of our infinite worth is, in a like sense, no proof of our unworthiness. We are of worth only because God's love is so great. We are worthy only when we have responded to that love.

The saying that man has equal potentialities for good and evil is also in need of greater elaboration. If, by that, you mean that man is not condemned before he starts, that he is not totally depraved in that sense, I agree. I haste to add, however, that to do good is a constant upward struggle. Unless we are ever on our guard against evil, even while we do that good, we shall be taken unawares.

By now History should have convinced us of the power of evil to drag the inattentive into the mire. Too often man is "incurvatus in se" bent upon himself. Unless we daily rekindle the desire to do His will and couple this desire to our vigilance, we shall lose the urge to be Christ-like. Failure of the former causes us to misplace God, failure of the latter to displace him.

The reliance of men upon their own abilities after the First World War and the resultant Second World War should convince us that it is beyond the power of man, individually or collectively, to save himself. Though we claim to learn from the error of the past we all too often do little to change that fact.

The nature of modern man is far from saintly. The Christian Century did well in claiming that the sins of Doehau were the sins of us all. Nor were Hitler, Hirohito and Co. freaks. They were children of the generation, though it may hurt our pride to admit it.

(continued on Page 6)



aggressor, the helper, the deliverer. This help and deliverance won for him immortal praise. A Paul, and many like him, could say "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," and "It is no longer I that live but Christ liveth in me." Be it deliverance from sin, from sorrow, from despair, from a feeling of futility and frustration, Christ in one way or another has proved himself a savior, according to the testimony of many in his own day and of multitudes in the centuries of the Christian era. And this is what the world needs today, a Savior. And the minister above all others must believe Christ to be Savior, otherwise he will have not much of a Gospel for a sinning and dying world.

o o o o o o o o o o

THE RURAL CHURCH - Marion Smith

As one travels through the countryside, he comes across the little rural churches. With their steeples towering above everything else they seem to protect the broad acres and their inhabitants, and that is just what they do. In a discussion in a little rural church this question was raised - "would it make much difference in the life of the community if the churches were torn down?" A reply was "we would probably have to erect jails in their places."

Let us consider the people who attend the rural churches. Most of them are farmers. Farming is more than an occupation - it is a way of life. So it is evident that the members of a rural church have more in common than the members of a city church, where all occupations are represented. One will notice in a rural church that the members will gather together after the services and talk about their crops, new machinery, new methods

of farming, and many other things related to their life and work, which is really interesting and diversified. Some have criticized this discussion of matters not related to religion, but I think it is good and healthful. It makes for fellowship and sociability, two truly Christian characteristics. As the story goes, a man once noticed Henry Ward Beecher reading a book on medicine and asked, "You read books on all subjects, don't you?" The famous divine replied "yes, on all subjects except theology."

Some of the teachings of our Lord are especially significant to the rural folk. For example, the parable of the sower and the parable of the mustard seed have direct bearing on agriculture. These rural folk can feel a kinship to the people to whom Jesus ministered. Every farmer understands what it takes to bring forth an abundant harvest; that is, the fertility of the land, the preparation of the seed bed, and cultivation of the crops. All this he can transfer into the spiritual realm with the realization that in both cases, it is God who gives the increase.

I like to think of the harvest home service in the rural church as symbolic of the culmination of the faith of the rural folk. Here, at this service, the first fruits of the land, so to speak, are brought in and placed upon the altar. The beautiful array of color in itself, is very attractive, pointing out the diversity and beauty of God's handiwork. We can truly say that the offerings are sacrificed to the Lord, for these offerings are used to sustain the orphans and aged in our Church homes, and is this not part of the Lord's work.

— 6 —