

THE SEMINARIAN

Published by the Society of Inquiry of the
Lancaster Seminary of the Evangelical
and Reformed Church
Lancaster, Penna.

MAY, 1947 ISSU

H. Clayton Moyer, Jr. (EDITOR)

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Lancaster, Pennsylvania
May 14, 1947

To the Class of '47:

For most of you, graduations have been the common norm. You undoubtedly have not forgotten the high-school graduation with the school orchestra playing Elger's famous "Pomp and Circumstance". Nor could you fully realize that four years of college work had been completed when you proudly tossed the academic tassel on the "other side". Now as you feel the scarlet hood across your shoulders it hardly seems possible that the great and final day has come. This is your commencement day—the day of your real beginning.

This open letter is written not with the desire to advise; I am not in a position to do that and even if I was, the Seminarian would hardly provide the proper medium. Neither is the letter written to inform the public that the class of '47 is made up of "good students and loyal friends". I wanted to write this letter to you because I had hoped to say something of merit which you would remember. But what I write may not be of merit and perhaps I shall say nothing which you will remember. But with sincerity and reverence I want to congratulate you. The path that leads to a seminary degree is seldom and easy one on which to travel. (Here's the cue for someone to say, "Ask the man who own's one!") The recipient of a seminary degree is required to do a great deal more than spend seven years of his life in school. But despite the difficulties, the inevitable moments of discouragement, the unfortunate price you were occasionally demanded to pay because you thought and questioned tradition, despite the many trials to which you were subjected, "You have fought the good fight, you have finished the race, you have kept the faith," and now the time for your departure has come. You have now qualified

to begin your work-----to fulfill your ministry. We, who remain, wish you not only success, but real achievement.

Sincerely,

H. CLAYTON MOYER, JR. (Editor)

.....

THE SEMINARY CALENDAR

(Richard Aulenbach)

We in the Lancaster Seminary have had quite a few red letter days in our school calendar. As our Fall term started, we were privileged to listen to a series of lectures by Kenneth Scott Lataurette of Yale Divinity School. All who heard him took with them a great deal of information and encouragement for their daily work. Between Semesters another series of lectures were held with Reinhold Niebuhr as lecturer. He spoke to us on Christian doctrines, and particularly emphasized his distinctive theology. Even those who do not agree with him were impressed by his clear and deep thinking. Our President-elect Dr. Meek delivered an inspiring address during this series, and to many this was their first introduction to him. Dr. Meek entered into Seminary affairs, although not yet president. He taught "The American Pulpit" to the Middler class. Rev. Vashadi, a representative of the Hungarian-Reformed Church, spoke to us in the lounge concerning the plight of his countrymen. Interest in our classes was stimulated by visits from several of our denominational officers.

Seminarrians were active in quite a few endeavors. Our basketball team won the title of the Independent Intermural League at Franklin and Marshall. Our baseball team also garnered its share of victories. The choir made a series of trips through Pennsylvania, and were very well received. Several of the students were instrumental in the success of the survey for placing a new church in Lancaster. The campaign for World Student Service Fund among our students has collected \$269.00 with more expected.

The students are happy to know that several of our professors have been duly honored this year. Professor Englert will receive his Ph.D. from Dropsie College in a few weeks; Dr. Dunn was voted into Phi Beta Kappa at Franklin and Marshall College. We are also glad to note some of the improvements already made to our buildings, as well as some new visual aids equipment for which we thank Rev. Hafer.

We wish all the seniors, those who are entering the active ministry and those who are continuing their studies, the greatest success in their life work.

A SENIOR PERSPECTIVE

(R. T. Schellhase)

Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, suggests most appropriate motto for our class when he says, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit." Surely, we have a great diversity of talent and interest within our group of sixteen. We have a prospective missionary to China; a mystic who intentionally intuites; a Henry who studies in spurts; a linguist who walks in a huff; a Sneezy who snores in Greek; and E.C. man who freezes birds on the wing; a Luther whose theses have yet to be posted; one who makes "dogatory" remarks; and a pauper who drives in a Packard. We have preachers who call God good. We have others that call him man. Some refer to the cosmic force, while one claims He's the Divine Prefabricator. We have young men and old men—with an age range from twenty-one to forty-one. There are some of us married, two have children. Others are bachelors, both baptized and confirmed.

We can say with all modesty that we are indeed a unique group. Since March in the war year of '45 we have attended classes as irregularly as our cuts would allow. When in classes we have had several members take voluminous notes, while others have been satisfied to listen, sleep or write letters—as their conscience dictated. It has been our privilege to sit under three different professors in the department of Christian Education. We have seen our beloved friend, Dr. Bair, pass to the life beyond and we have welcomed the coming of President-elect Dr. Meek while witnessing the retirement of Dr. Herman.

Indeed, our Seminary days have been eventful. It has been a ripe experience to enjoy the fellowship which this institution provides. Even though our class is so diverse and divided in any number of ways, we have come to appreciate and understand each other's point of view. Beneath the superficial differences lies the challenge of the ministry which binds us together to work for the advancement of God's Kingdom. We came as ambitious young men who wanted to make good; we leave as more mature Christians zealous to make the world better!

.....

THEODORE FREDERICK HERMAN: CHRISTIAN LIBERAL

(Fred Knieriem)

It was not in a day suffused with Christian spirit that Theodore Frederick Herman was inaugurated into the chair of systematic theology at our Seminary, for, as he had stated but a year earlier when delivering the charge to I. H. DeLong, the age was "the parable of the prodigal son writ large". It was characterized by "drinking in abundance" and "reveling in a splendid civilization"; yet, it was "living its splendid, abundant life in a far country where the abiding things, the eternal verities seemed) vague and lack-luster." Meanwhile, a "bedlam of inarticulate voices" was crying for relief from the famine, both the cause and cure of which were little understood.

As an answer to this plea for succor, the "marginal notes" of Karl Barth were soon to fulminate against the unrealistically optimistic theologians; yet, the balm for the ills of the age was not in such earthquake, wind or fire but rather in the still, small voice of synthesis and spirituality, as H.M.J. Klein

averred on May 12, 1910, in his charge to Dr. Herman. "We now need not so much the inspector to condemn as the architect to plan," he declared. "The need of the day is for men who will take the truths that have been taught to us on the flood of scientific and historic studies and weld them together into a definite, coherent, reasoned and reasonable body of doctrine." And the new professor agreed that they were awaiting the Christian theologian who would perform the synthesis "to our complete satisfaction."

Now, though the good doctor may decline the appellation of Emerson's "new teacher" in our seminary, those who have sat under him will attest that his efforts to follow "those shining laws" and "see them come full circle" have been attended by success. Against the scientism of thirty years ago as well as against that of the present, he helped to develop and champion a theory of religious knowledge which he termed "the plan of campaign in the struggle between matter and mind." Without the stultification of either reason or intuition, his theology has combined the conclusions of the best philosophy and the latest science with the intuited knowledge of religious experience. Largely because of his contributions, theology has been able to assert itself as an equal with the physical sciences; yet, the new theologians have been able to cry "Peace" to the unenlightened, warring factions "because there is no quarrel".

What is more, with this Weltanschauung which scandalizes neither the heart nor mind, it has also been possible for Dr. Herman to work toward resolving the dilemma posed by the fact of suffering and by the Christian affirmation of a loving, omnipotent God. Admitting that this is not the best possible world, Dr. Herman nevertheless emphasizes that it is best suited for God's purpose--the development of personalities; consequently, pain is put into perspective as redemptive not punitive, and the processes with which only short-sighted scientists stop are recognized as the methods of God, who is great not as law-giver but as Love-giver. Thus, it is to the Goodness of God that Dr. Herman has directed our attention, for as a fellow student once remarked, "If a Scotch woman could say that Reinhold Niebuhr made God great, surely we can affirm that Dr. Herman made him good."

Notwithstanding his positive response to Dr. Klein's challenge to "be true to the present", Dr. Herman has likewise heeded the other's admonition to "cherish the past." For him, our faith is inextricably bound up with the "great memories" as well as with "great experiences and great expectations." Dr. Herman thus highly regards the great symbols of Christianity, among which he numbers in particular the worn copy of the catechism which he used as a boy; still, his sense of objectivity enables him to evaluate the old landmarks in the light of the best modern thought. His historical sense, therefore, is not fetishism but appreciation of the foundations upon which we build today.

But, to go on, we note that Dr. Herman has also been true to the charge to "be fearless of the future", for his theology today is the result of a pilgrimage involving constant modification in the liberal spirit. Thus, it was that he migrated from ardent to "chastened Ritschlianism" as later developments corrected the liberalism of that school. In like manner, Dr. Herman has moved to appreciation of the significant possibilities of panpsychism, which thirty-eight years ago he classed with pessimism and agnosticism. By his keeping faith with the liberal spirit, he has therefore kept faith with living theology.

In the classroom too, we have found his expression of liberalism not only in ideas but by his reluctance to dogmatize. To be sure, his pedagogical application of the spirit has frequently been construed as weakness but only by those who lack capacity or initiative to go beyond pre-digested theologies.

Rather, we see that Dr. Herman has endeavored to have us experience, read and reflect; hence, as the method of God is calculated to develop personalities, this non-dogmatic approach aims to have us create independently if not uniquely our own theologies.

Perhaps, then, if we are looking for one thing above all others for which we are indebted to Dr. Herman, it is the impact of his liberal spirit upon us. With the premise that "our deepest convictions are not certainties of logic but of life," he has assayed to lead Christian ministers to a vital Christian faith; still, he has left the acceptance of that faith to us as it must be. It is for this that we are deeply grateful, and it is for the continuance of this spirit that we shall keep our eyes upon him.

At this stepping down from the professorial chair, we expect Dr. Herman not to retire but to retrench for the continuation of the campaign in other parts of the field. He has never been a lotus-eater but rather of the tribe of Ulysses,

yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

Knowing that he will still pursue that "flying goal", our word to Dr. Herman has not the finality of farewell but the expectancy of Aufwiederschen.

.....
LIFE'S BEST

"Desire earnestly the greater gifts, and moreover, a most excellent way show I unto you." (I Corinthians 12:31)

Victor Hugo once said, The beautiful is as useful as the useful. There are many good things in life. If you really look for them, you will find them. But we want more than good things. We want the very best! It is this desire of ours for the very best that lifts us above the animal creation and makes us men and women. Then we learn how to see and to use the best, we will know what Victor Hugo meant.

We have in our schools places where it seems that the best things men have ever said or thought or done are placed before us. We come to school poor, and leave it with great valuables. We enter the schoolhouse with out much of anything, and we leave it with treasures that have stood the weathering of the years--the best books, the best art, the best music, the best poetry, the best science. If our schools did nothing more than give us this chance to meet life at its best, they would put us forever in their debt.

(From Windows of Worship)

