

THE SEMINARIAN

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Editorially

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February has been proclaimed as race relations month. Possibly no other issue so intimately confronts America today, for it is exemplified racial inequality in marked degree. Here the Christian Church must play a major role. The Christian does not plead for tolerance - for tolerance implies leniency towards an inferior group. Rather, the Christian pleads for equality on the grounds that all men are children of God. This proclamation was radical in Jesus' day, and carries social dynamite in contemporary society. The times are such that demand radical action if civilization is to be saved.

The hatred of black skins, for example, is primarily a camouflage for a deeper feeling of insecurity in the challenging of economic security of one group by another. Thus to plead for equality in races is to mouth a meaningless platitude without first seeking the fundamental causes, lest in some way it might threaten our own complacency. The application of the Christian ethic in race relations is to apply it in every phase of life, and only if the Church is daring enough to disrupt modern life on every level will the cure of any one level be realized. The Christian Church is the disturbing element in every unjust society. The world needs the effects of more "Christian disturbers".

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LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD..... Nelson Andres

February '46 is here! The end, the finis, -30-!

The past fades into memories of early college life; to now acquaintances, now old friends; to study; to carefree days; to the pleasant and the unpleasant; to February '44 and my entrance into the Seminary; to more new friends; to grand people; to departing of old friends; to October graduation activities; to preaching; to my trial sermon; to my election; correspondence; to my official call and acceptance; to the ordination preparation.

I look forward to a trip West; to ordination; to the duties and obligations of my ministry at Homestead-Duquesne Charge, Pennsylvania.

So I prepare to leave; before leaving these "firm foundations", I would like to clear my mind on a few questions that disturb my mind. With these answered, I can leave, prepared to meet the future.

1. How can I use those profound quotations of Dr. Herman's? ("tele -teleo - what was that again, Dr?")
2. When can I teach that "International Standard Course", and when will it be opportune to monopolize that "two-way approach", Dr. Hamner.
3. Will it be proper to stress Amos' theology? (Pittsburgh's a steel center, you know, Prof. Englert.)
4. Oh Dr. Bair, do I hold the baby or does the mother, or the Father, or the sponsors, at my first baptism?
5. Why was it, Dr. Dunn, that Luther wouldn't shake hands with Zwingli? (Or was it that Zwingli wouldn't shake hands with Luther?)
6. In the interest of ecumenicity, Dr. Beaver, the old "E" confession in the Order of Holy Communion isn't that bad, is it?
7. No question, Dr. Frantz. I agree - John Does have a real vital, Christian theology.

With answers - I can "depart in peace."

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.....Donald M. C. Englert

"The race problem," writes Underwood in "Christianity Where You Live", "remains America's number one domestic problem and its most explosive one". You and I may not agree with him as to its important place, but there is no question about its explosive qualities. In the aftermath of World War I, numerous bloody race riots occurred in the North as well as in the South. World War II has already experienced major catastrophes in Detroit and Beaumont, Texas, while fatal clashes were narrowly averted in other places, notably Harlem and nearby Philadelphia. It remains to be seen whether the aftermath of World War II will bring increased racial tensions and its attendant violence.

It is perhaps natural that the Negro should seek to better his position during and after a world-wide conflict. He has been used during the conflict as laborer in factory and behind the lines, and, when given the chance, in active combat duty. He has had a share in the winning of the victory; he is expecting therefore a share in the triumph. If, as he was told, this was a war for democracy and against the race theories of the Nazis, he is looking for an end of the Nazi doctrines and a share in democracy here at home.

A. Clayton Powell, Jr., the colorful preacher and Congressman from Harlem, has voiced this aspiration in his latest book, "Marching Blacks". He counsels non-violence and dares to hope that there are enough "now whites" to make it work. He recognizes that "today there is no group in America, including the Christian Church, that practices racial brotherhood one-tenth as much as in the Communist party", but he puts his hope in the Pearl Bucks, the Eleanor Roosevelts, the Lillian Smiths, the influence of Wendell Willkie, and the younger generation of whites and negroes in North and South.

What part should the Church play in easing these tensions which tend to divide a man from his brother of a darker hue? In a recent speech reported in "The Messenger" of Jan. 22nd, Dr. Edwin McNeill Poteat, president of the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, asserted that before the Church can speak with moral authority "it must be confronted by its own complicity in the encouragement of race prejudice and the practice of discrimination and segregation."

There's the rub. May we, dare we speak out against these evils in others unless we are willing to change our own ways? Why talk about race prejudice in the South when our own Church educational institutions, North as well as South, discriminate against the Negro? Why decry religious or national bigotry in others when our quota systems limit the number of Jews and Italians in our schools of higher learning?

Hitler said his coming to power would result in a thousand-year war. The man is dead but not his ideas. Our force of arms won us then military victory but we are in great danger of losing the war of ideas. As long as the Rankins and Bilbos poison the minds of men, we are not winning this struggle, more important than World War II, the battle for the hearts and souls of men.

There are, however, rays of hope. Here and there, enlightened groups are working for an end to racial and religious intolerance and discrimination. The Social Action Committee of Lancaster Synod is to be commended for having recommended the sending of a local pastor to the Annual Institute on Race Relations held at Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn. last July 1-21. The local Ministerium is cooperating with the Inter-Racial Council in sponsoring six inter-racial Church services during the winter. These are some of the things that will bear fruit in better race relations in years to come.

What can you as a young minister do? You can acquaint yourself with the problem and all its ramifications by reading the extensive literature on the subject. You can work with groups in your Church in exploring the possibilities in your own community for bettering the lot of minority groups and for creating better understanding between peoples of differing races and faiths. You can work in a humble manner as preacher, pastor, and exemplar of the Christian Way to bring about the ideal of our Master "that they may all be one."

Shall the Confessional Heritage of the Evangelical and
Reformed Church be Maintained?

.....Dr. Theodore F. Herman

The answer to this question depends upon one's definition of "confessional heritage." Or, in simpler phrase, upon one's definition of a creed. Is a creed a test of orthodoxy or a testimony of faith? The answer to that question requires more space than a column in our paper. It concerns both the genesis and the growth of creeds, and, particularly, their meaning and authority.

Briefly, a creed originates as a personal testimony of faith, and tends to become a collective test of beliefs. This statement, I believe, explains both the psychological genesis of creeds in human experience and their historical growth and development. Creeds begin as an individual confession of faith, welling up spontaneously and coercively in the heart of the confessor, and gradually they become corporate tests of beliefs.

Consider Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi - his "creed" (Matt. 16:13-17). It was a testimony of his personal faith, his confession that Jesus was the Messiah. It expressed a great religious conviction, rooted in a personal experience. His faith was the result of his encounter with Jesus, his personal response to the grace and truth revealed in the message and ministry of the Master. It was the testimony and tribute of his heart to the greatness of Jesus, couched in the highest category of religious thought available for Peter, the Jewish disciple.

Consider, further, the growth and development of creeds in subsequent ages within organized Christianity, resulting in the trinitarian and christological creeds of the ecumenical Councils. Even within the New Testament we find a growing christology, and the quest for more adequate formulas of the Church's faith in Christ continued throughout the patristic age. It is a far cry from the germ-coll of Peter's faith in Jesus as the Messiah to the great formula framed at Chalcedon in 451. In this creedal formula of the person of Christ we discern the complete transformation of a creed from testimony to test. Certain doctrinal propositions about His person and work are now held to be the essential conditions of salvation.

In the light of this very sketchy analysis of the genesis and growth of the creeds of the Church, we may affirm that every technical creed enshrines cardinal Christian truth. In these changing and growing formulas the Church has sought to set forth in the highest categories of thought the generic faith of Christianity that God did dwell in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. The historic creeds of the Church, therefore, are neither the fanciful speculations of men, nor the final revelation of God. They are the milestones in men's growing apprehension and appreciation of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

If creeds are regarded as tests of orthodox beliefs, our aim must be to indoctrinate men with these beliefs for their salvation. If creeds are held to be the testimony of a living faith, our aim must be to engender in men redemptive faith in Jesus Christ, by the preaching of His gospel, and by our practice of His ministry of love.

Most assuredly the Evangelical and Reformed Church seeks earnestly to maintain her confessional heritage. She confesses the great affirmations of faith enshrined in the creedal formulas of the Reformation, and our Constitution selects certain of these creedal formulas as being especially significant for us in the light of our history. And, at the same time,



Dr. Hernan's Article - continued:

our Constitution accords members of our Church the liberty of conscience inherent in the gospel in the interpretation of these confessions.

THE VALUE OF SKEPTICISM FOR CHRISTIAN THOUGHT - Thurman Poston, Jr.

Whenever one mentions skepticism as a system or as a method, which is more correct technically, many enter upon a state of extreme trepidation, for they feel that all thought that is of value will be worthlessly destroyed by such an approach to the multitudinous problems that confront men. And their fear is somewhat justified because the scholar who is by and large skeptical, and who treads amid the paths of doubt and agnosticism, is as liable to egregious error as any other philosopher with another system. But it is the purpose of this too brief essay to point out in a few generalizations, the worth and merit of an attitude that resolutely laid hold of the minds of men even before the sophists of Socrates' day.

The genuine skeptic, in short, "denies that any or all of the fine methods of deriving ideas and justifying beliefs, authoritarianism, mysticism, rationalism, empiricism, pragmatism, can be genuine knowledge." In this point of view, the philosopher adheres to a system only in the sense that an atheist adheres to a theology, or that an anarchist adheres to a theory of government. There is no certainty, no authority--in short, knowledge is an impossibility because of 1) the rejection of all opinions or theories that have been held by some philosopher, 2) the seemingly endless and futile diversity of beliefs among not only competent investigators but also men in general, 3) the infinite number of antinomies to which there is no third possibility, 4) the possibility of confuting what seems to be an undeniable truth derived from the perceptions of the experiences in space, 5) the extreme likelihood of error in temporal perception, (contrast the spatial perception of four).

It appears in these arguments that suspended judgment in which no possibility of a conclusion or a probable certainty is the necessary outcome. What may the philosopher answer to these five arguments of the skeptic? Argument one and two may be answered by pointing out that any number of once hopeless problems have been solved to the complete satisfaction. From this empirical fact, we may conclude that there is a strong probability that other problems may be solved in the history of human thought. Argument three may be answered by pointing out that despite the uncertainty of paradoxical opinions that exist, we nevertheless do experience things and effects--e.g. notions. A professor of mine in college pointed out that we experience not "points and instances of notions so much as we experience intervals or lapses." He further pointed out that notion consists of "one to one correlation of intervals rather than the correlation of points and instances." The fourth argument may be answered by the capability of science in mobilizing sufficient data to at least in a quantitative manner approach probable certainty and by pointing out that the skeptic, in order to present any argument at all, had to make certain assumptions and that therefore, he is therein consistent, and his argument remains unproved. And the same answers may be applied to argument five.

Now if these answers to the skeptic are true --and many, including Montague, Brightman, Cohen, and Nagel think so--then has the writer any argument to support the hypothesis that there is value in skepticism? He most certainly has! The writer, of course, rejects justifiably the extreme arguments of the philosophic skeptic. However, let it be pointed out that the answers, rather than supporting dogmatism, finality, rigidity, or fixity, only substantially underlie the probability of knowledge. Probability does not destroy but only encourages a constant and intensive study of all the aspects of human life.

Skepticism, therefore, does not become a method or a system, which consistently is impossible, but rather becomes an attitude, or an approach, not final or absolute or destructive in itself. Skepticism, therefore, does not deny in itself knowledge but only criticizes, doubts, and directs as guides. It may be called an attitude of "reverent agnosticism." The sacredness or validity of any belief is not impaired by a philosophic skepticism, but rather its cosmic value, if it possesses any such relationship at all, will only be clarified and elucidated. The greater the value of any thought, the greater is the necessity for comprehending and apprehending it.

Thurman Poston, Jr. Article - continued.

The philosophy of skepticism is not a way of salvation or succor. But it is a means to an understanding of the general trend of what seems to be a salvational and redemptive plan in our universe. Skepticism salts and removes the dross and the coarse from the pure and the fine.

To submit to dogmatism or finality or skepticism in the extreme sense in thought would be fatal, not only in a valuable universe, but also would be utterly inconsistent with a rational, valuation cosmos.

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This is the kind of thing Brother George Hosler allows the congregation at Hill Church to read at a Valentine Social:

A minister in a certain town took permanent leave of his congregation in the following manner:

"Brothers and sisters, I come to say good-by. I don't think God loves this Church, because none of you ever die. I don't think you love each other, because I never marry any of you. I don't think you love me, because you have not paid my salary. Your donations are moldy fruit, and by their fruits ye shall know them."

"Brethren I am going to a better place. I have been called to be chaplain of a prison. Where I go ye cannot come, but I go to prepare a place for you. Good-by".

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We wish to congratulate the new officers of the Society of Inquiry - and wish them then well in their new work:

President:	Paul Theodore Manrodt	Of the Baltimore Manrodt
Vice Pres:	Richard Tyson Schellhase	Of the Hellertown Schellhases
Secretary		
-Treasurer:	George Harold Meyers	Of Sperry's Church. (HWAP)

We thank the retiring officers for the fine work they accomplished.

- Charles Glass, President, Herb Reichert, V. Pres. and Bill Penn, Sec.-Treas.

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Dr. Dunn in correcting an examination paper of the Middler Class thought sure it was Fred Knierions (But it wasn't) for it contained this answer to the question

"What was the stirrup episode?" Answer: This was an incident which contained a little horseplay. The King was to hold the stirrup and stood while the pope dismounted but instead he walked away. Dr. Dunn appreciates humor but not in examinations so instead of an A it will be a B-. The middler certainly will get a kick out of that.

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We expect many of the fellows back at school for the Convocation Week - Some of the well known celebrities will be: William Chinabound Daniels, Gordon Buddyroe Sperry (HWAP), Carl Towering Osenbach, and many other good fellows. We welcome them - We greet them - We salute them. For what - we don't know.

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Have a fine vacation between March 1st and March 10th - Ready, able and willing to get started again on March 1st. Rumors are that Dick Aulenbach will come over from F. & M. and be one of us, and a number of college boys will be on the third floor - let us make them feel at home and a part of our great family.

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