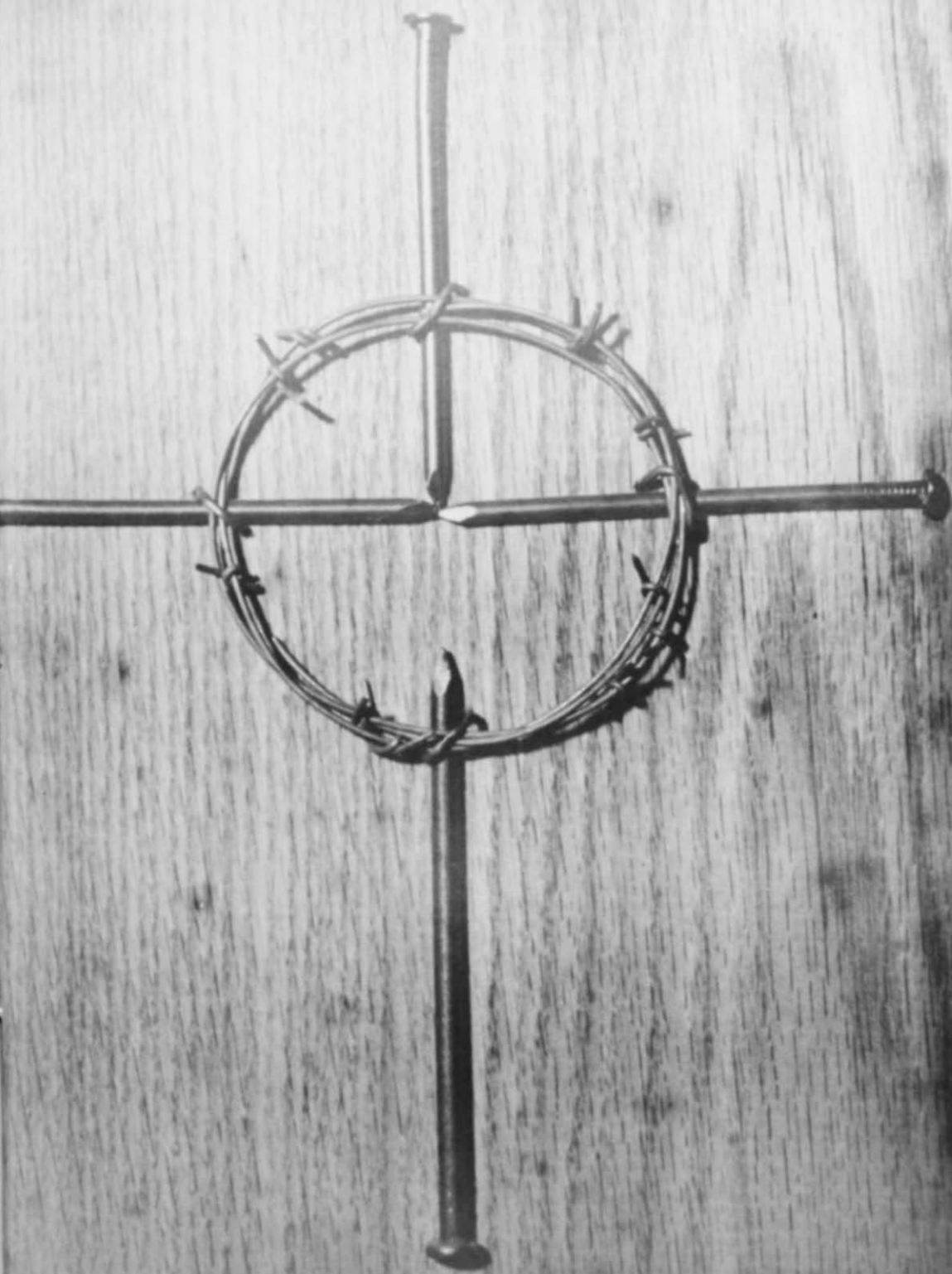


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The Seminarian

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FUNDAMENTALS, FANCIES, AND THE FATHERS

Professor John H. P. Reumann

From the very outset of its 2000 year career, Christianity has been a religion faced with the problem of interpreting a Book. Even when Christianity was first cast out as an unwanted child from the synagogue, she took with her a Book, which she proclaimed, with an insistent pride, to be "her Book." This being so, the Old Testament -- had to be interpreted; and as a Christian literature arose that acquired the status of canonicity, this too required interpretation. Hence, the perennial task of exegesis for the Church.

But from the very beginning there have been divergent paths along which interpreters have trod. Some have stressed an historical approach -- the necessity to understand the literal meaning of the scriptural words, with full attention to historical background, grammar, and such pedantic details. Others have emphasized what may be called a "theological" approach -- an emphasis on understanding any verse in the light of certain doctrines or dogmas -- sometimes drawn from the Bible itself, sometimes not -- an endeavor which, if it does not ignore the literal sense entirely, usually goes beyond, to seek some deeper, esoteric meaning, often allegorical.

These two exegetical trends, historical and "theological," can be seen at work in the Ancient Church; Antioch championed one, Alexandria espoused the other, though sometimes the same man could pioneer at both, as Origen, who labored to establish a better critical text and also propounded such mysterious explanations of passages as to earn the title of the leading biblical alchemist of his day! The two trends can be observed in the Medieval Church, though here the allegorical and theological generally choked out the historical approach. Certainly in the Reformation Church both appear; there was a revival of scholarship and rebirth in linguistic interest, the historical method, in essence, but also a theological stress that issued in the age of Protestant Scholasticism.

Likewise in modern times the same two principles can be seen, often in opposition to each other. Certainly the last century has watched a rise of the Historical Method as never before; at times it has threatened to become a new cult in itself, and its high priests and disciples have become so enamored of their findings that they desire to go no further than source analysis or Formgeschichte or the other terrifying devices they employ. In opposition to all this, there has arisen in various forms, a reaction against historical criticism. Sometimes this reaction took the form of renascent Theology clothed in biblical terminology (Barthianism, for instance);

other times it took the form of rampant biblicism calling itself theology (Fundamentalism, for instance). These reactions stressed the "biblical," but too often they represented merely a different set of presuppositions or prejudices from those with which the "historians" had operated -- and which, in turn, led to different answers, all from the same Bible!

This contrast in exegetical method can be seen in the varying results different groups have achieved from the Bible. Liberals, for instance, devoid of much theology, operated on Holy Writ with such devastating effect, that anguished Fundamentalists began to cry, in the words of Mary, "They have taken away my lord and I know not where they have laid him!" Liberals, on the other hand, watched in dismay the violence which some interpreters did to the Bible, when they ignored the historical side completely; thus by scriptural legerdemain they were able to extract from the New Testament precise predictions about the atom bomb (post eventum, of course) and even a defense of the capitalistic system of economics, direct from the mouth of Jesus! One ingenious exegete even discovered that the mark of the beast at Rev. 13:18 could be made to spell "Hitler" -- if you make A equal 100, B equal 101, and so forth, the name comes out exactly to 666! Just why one should make A equal 100 never occurred to this interpreter, nor did the fact that you can make any name come out to 666 if you play with the figures long enough and adopt a scheme arbitrary enough; he simply went on his merry "theological" way of "interpreting" the Bible.

More soberly, though, this same contrast between historical and theological exegesis is still one that troubles many pastors and seminary students today. Some all too readily place an over-emphasis on the historical and end up becoming mere antiquarians with a pulpit for a lecture hall -- though this danger is not grave with most of us. Others -- and one suspects it is the larger group -- stress the "deeper meanings" of scripture; they usually call them "spiritual" and mean allegorical, ending up philosophizing and moralizing in a pious way, with a traditional text as a pretext for these wanderings. This latter malady is particularly apt to occur in the case of those who become fed up with the disciplines of language study, the boredom of the problems of biblical introduction, and the labor of using the historical approach. None of this for them; just the "spiritual emphasis," please!

Now the point of this article is simply to suggest that either point of view alone is dangerous oversimplification, and that what we need in interpreting the scriptures is the full use of both approaches, the historical and the theological, properly understood, the one as corrective for the other. We need historical exegesis, because the Christian revelation and writings are always grounded in history; and theological exe-

genesis, because it is always a revelation of God, and the writings are always meant to witness to him. The first alone degenerates into antiquarianism and irrelevancy; the second, by itself, into speculation and arbitrary allegory. Both must work together, the one as a corrective to the other, that exegesis may come to its proper fulness.

II

We are currently in a period of revived theological interest; theological interpretation of the Bible is in some ways on the upswing, and so I am not concerned at the moment that this vital element will be ignored, at least among Lutherans. It is entirely possible, however, that sometimes our very theological concern will lead us to do violence to the Biblical materials. This may be done sometimes in the name of the Confessions, sometimes in the name of Neo-orthodoxy, sometimes in the name of Stewardship, or in the name of Liturgy. It does not matter why; the point is that the historical approach is needed to correct this misuse of scripture.

To take a case in point, even the traditional Lutheran principle of Christocentricity, perfectly correct in itself, can lead to abuses which only a sound sense of the historical can curb. Luther, as is well known, did encourage a Christ-centered approach to the Bible. "If you would interpret well and surely," he wrote in his Introduction to the Old Testament (1523), "set Christ before you; for he is the man to whom it all applies." Some of Luther's followers expressed it, "He is the best theologian who finds Christ everywhere in the scriptures." Even this is good advice, but it can be misused and perverted, unfortunately; and there is no period which demonstrates the matter better than that of the Church Fathers. Here, in the cases of some Fathers, we see Christocentric, "theological" interpretation run amuck, unchecked by any sense of history.

The example in the Epistle of Barnabas is almost too well-known to require retelling. This ingenious author finds a perfectly clear (to him) prediction of Jesus and his cross in the fact that Abraham circumcised 318 members of his household (Gen. 17) -- at least, the symbol for 300, the Greek letter T, looks a little like a cross, and the letters used for 18, IH, are an abbreviation for IHSOUS, Jesus! And he adds blandly, pleased at his own inventiveness (ch. 9), "No one has heard from me a more excellent teaching -- but I know you are worthy!" This is a "theological" approach to the Bible at its worst, unchecked by any sense of the historical. Abraham might as well have never lived and could have been as mythical as Heracles; the author's "spiritual" truth would have been just as valid to him!

Yet there are more glaring examples of the misuse of the Old Testament along such lines. This same Barnabas also turns his hand to making sense out of the Mosaic dietary laws with amazing results (ch. 10). For him, the provision, "You shall not eat swine" (Lev. 11:7), simply means, "Do not associate with swinish people." Likewise the provision, "Nor shalt thou eat the hyena" (Just where he got this verse in the Old Testament is uncertain, but he was convinced that there was such a verse.) is allegorized to mean, "You shall not become a fornicator or adulterer," and he adds a reason, "because this animal changes its nature every year, and becomes now male, now female," thus showing that his biology was as bad at times as his hermeneutics!

But we must not think that Barnabas was the only Father adept at playing with theology and finding Christ in the most amazing places of the Old Testament. Others did it with even more facility. Thus Clement of Alexandria was able to say that the story of Isaac sporting with his wife and helpmeet Rebecca, while King Abimelech plays Peeping Tom through a window (Gen. 26:8), typifies "a supramundane wisdom contemplating the mystery of sport," and that secondly it stands for Christ, looking through the window and rejoicing over his Church! (Paedagogus, I, 5)

We must not think either that this type of interpretation applied only to the Old Testament. The Fathers went on to ignore the historical and accentuate the "spiritual" in the New Testament as well. Parables offered an excellent starting point, like the story of the Good Samaritan. Clement begins the process in his sermon on "The Rich Man's Salvation," by making the Good Samaritan represent Jesus, who cares for us sinners after we have been "almost done to death by the world-rulers of darkness," and who pours into our wounds some wine (i.e., the sacrament, of course) and the oil of pity (Quis Dives, 29). Augustine, however, was to go whole hog in "spiritualizing" this parable, for he makes the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho stand for Adam; the thieves who strip him of his immortality he makes into the devil and his angels; the inn becomes the Church, with St. Paul worked into the picture as the inn-keeper! (Quaestiones Evangeliorum, II.19)

As if this isn't enough, the same treatment was given to other parts of the New Testament. The fact that Matthew uses the phrase "a young colt" in his story of the Triumphal Entry (Matt. 21:5, AV "the foal of an ass") enables Clement to develop the idea that "we who are little ones are such colts, being reared up by our divine Colt-Tamer," i.e., Jesus, imagery picked up by a later writer. Theodulph of Orleans, in a hymn, though the stanza is now omitted from most of our hymnals --

"Be Thou, O Lord, the Rider,

And we the little ass;

That to God's Holy City

Together we may pass." --

a verse which its translator, John Mason Neale, remarked was "usually sung till the seventeenth century, at the pious quaintness of which we can scarcely avoid a smile."

Even in the teachings of Jesus any literal sense often has to go by the board. When Clement wants to prove his point that a Christian should wear a beard and not pluck out the hairs the way the more effeminate Alexandrians of his day used to do, he finds proof in Matt. 10:30, "The very hairs of your head are numbered," a text which he assures his readers applies to the beard as well as to the top of the head! (Exhortation to the Greeks, iii.3)

Sacred arithmetic must not be omitted either in any survey of what "theological" interpretation was able to do to the Bible in finding deeper meanings. Clement again demonstrates this. The 318 servants of Abraham had an even deeper significance for him, which Barnabas had missed: 300 is, of course, "3 multiplied by 100. Ten is allowed to be the perfect number. And 8 is the first cube, which is equality in all the dimensions -- length, breadth, and depth." Such hints give the alert reader a few more facts to play with! The dimensions of the Tabernacle happened to be 300 cubits by 50 cubits by 30 cubits; for Clement this has a wondrous meaning: "Some say that 300 cubits are the symbol of the Lord's sign" -- i.e., the cross; "fifty, of the hope and remission given at Pentecost; 30, or as in some 12 (even variant readings have significance!) they say points to the preaching of the gospel, because the Lord preached in his thirtieth year, and his apostles were twelve." Even the cubit stands for the "unity of the faith" (Miscellanies, vi.11)! Of course, in a sense here, Clement was doing nothing more than beating heretics at their own "numbers game"; for the Gnostics, after all, had used the same traditional thirty year period before Jesus' ministry to "prove" the 30 aeons in their Pleroma, a figure which they also found vouchsafed in the fact that the laborers in the Parable of the Vineyard (Matt. 20) were called at the first, third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours -- and $1 + 3 + 6 + 9 + 11 = 30!$ (Iraenaeus, Against All Heresies, ch. 1) Small wonder it is that Celsus in his True Reason accused the Christians (and Jews) of being ashamed of their sacred books, because they explained away the obvious with such outlandish interpretations.

III

It is, of course, all too easy for us to be hard in our judgments on the Church Fathers and their biblical interpretations. But perhaps these words from a recent writer on Patristics, concerning Origen, but applicable to all the

Fathers, help set the matter in a more balanced perspective: "We in the twentieth-century do no credit to ourselves if we despise the third century for not possessing those tools by the aid of which in our own life-time we have only just succeeded in levelling the ground. What Origen achieved is of enormous importance...The allegorical method saved the Scriptures for the Church...(from) Jewish controversialists and...educated Hellenists. And by saving the Bible, it gave security to the historical foundation of the Christian faith and permanence to the evangelical standard of Christian values." (G.L. Prestige, Fathers and Heretics, pp. 58f.)

We cannot, of course, agree with much of the exegesis of the Fathers; such nonsense is purely arbitrary allegory, unchecked by any historical sense whatsoever -- this is a "theological" approach to the Scriptures, in its bad sense; it is, yes, an application, literally, of the dictum, "He is the best theologian who finds Christ everywhere in Scripture," leading to the very worst results. We cannot always accept such results, but we can be thankful that the Fathers saved the Scriptures for us. And now the question is: what shall we do with them -- how shall we interpret the Bible?

In our age the tools are many times better for a sound historical approach. Although sometimes this very historical approach may remove cherished interpretations of the past as unsound or contrary to what the biblical writer meant to say, we must remember that faith, in the biblical sense, is always faith in God, not in our systems of theology, or in a Book, or in our tools, or in anything else we may use as a prop to keep us from trusting in Him alone. There is, of course, ample room for a proper theological approach to Scripture, provided that we keep remembering that our theology must constantly be checked by reference to the Biblical witness to the Word Revealed. Sola fide and sola scriptura go hand in hand. But as a constant check against erroneous interpretation, against false, subjective allegorizing, there is no better guard than an historical approach.

Yes, we may say, in summary, we believe in viewing the Bible in a Christocentric way -- but none of us could swallow the perversions of the Fathers here. The "best theologian" must check his rasher fancies by the sound common sense of the historical approach. Precisely here is justified the Seminary's concern with languages, biblical introduction and content, and all the other pedantic disciplines.

In short: there are fundamentals to be proclaimed; but lest they degenerate into mere fancies of our own, we need the discipline of real historical interpretation -- of the necessity of which there is no greater example than the Fathers.

ANGEL ANTICS --

Mt. Airy's "Angels" completed their regular season March 14, with an impressive 11-3 record, tied with Ascension Church for third place honors. Several preliminary play-offs were staged before the season's grand finale.

In the final league game the "Angels" lost to Ascension to the tune of 40-34. Behind by 15 points at half-time, the "Angels" rallied to come within two points of the rivals, but couldn't quite jump into the lead. John Kulsar led the team by scoring 11 points.

At press time, results of the first play-off game showed Ascension taking another close one at the "Angels'" expense, 69-65. Losing by four points at the half, manager John Ziegler's snappy crew tied it up 50-50 at the end of the third quarter. Again the rally fell short by only a few points. Fred Frick took scoring honors with 16 markers, closely followed by Ernie Schmidt and Don Adickes.

By losing to Ascension, the "Angels" dropped into a fourth place tie, with a possibility of entering the final play-offs.

Adickes leads Seminary scoring with 120 total points.

In the last non-league game, Philadelphia Bible Institute topped the "Angels" 71-59. Larry Hand took the evening's scoring honors by cashing in on 58 per cent of

his shots for a total of 31 points.

SPORTS IN SHORT...With warm weather and spring-fever invading the campus, sounds of a ball hitting the pocket of a leather mitt and Martin Luther (Acker) driving a ball to fellow tennis player Martin J.H. will be heard...Athletic committee purchased two badly needed basketballs for the "Angels" after student body executive committee decided that second ping-pong table wasn't really needed...

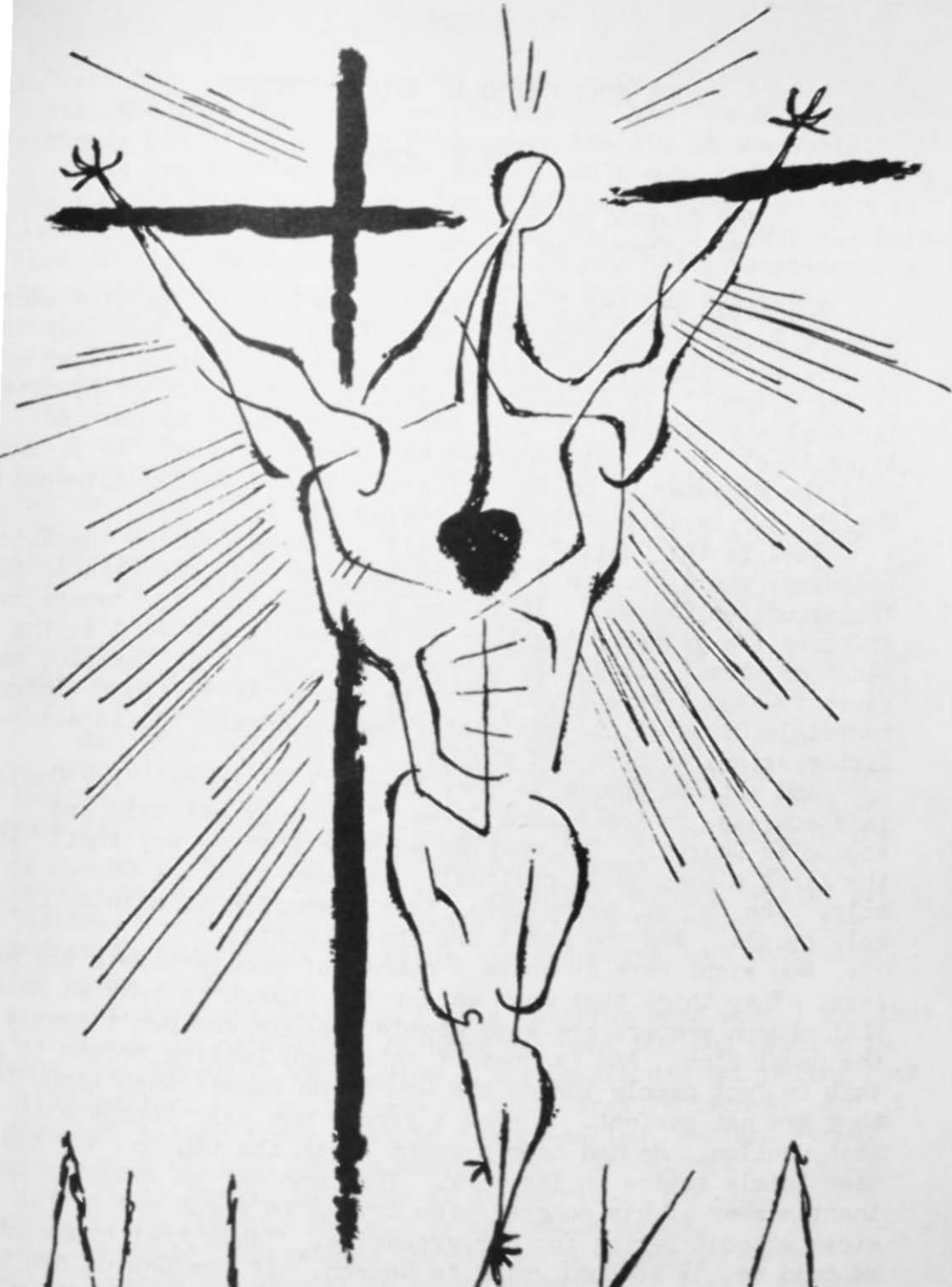
Junior class, after running off with bowling honors, hopes to capture volleyball crown this spring...Several men were seen practicing serves for the post-Easter tournament.

Ping-pong tournament was supposed to start March 14; it's a round-robin...Fred Frick and Walt Hitchcock scored 50 points between them when the "Angels" beat St. Michael's...Spectator comment at Ascension game: "Let's go, Ascension; you can lick these 'old men!'"...

Congratulations and halos to the "Angels" for willingly shelving their books to play 20 games...took a lot of time that could have been spent studying...Seven pros seen at one game.

-- Al Schrum

FLASH The Mt. Airy "Angels" failed in their bid for a final playoff berth, losing to Advocate Church, 48-30. Results of the game broke a fourth place tie.



NIKA

ONE HOLY CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC

James P. Berg

"My Church, my Church, my dear old Church!
My fathers' and my own!..."

How often you and I have sung those lines! We have known them by heart from childhood. Yet, I wonder just how many of us have ever stopped to think what those words mean. Just what is "my Church?" Is it this building on the corner of Plumstead and Congress Streets, or that one at Germantown Avenue and Allen Lane? Is it this congregation, or that one? Is it perhaps the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, or the United Lutheran Church? Or is it perchance something else?

What is the Church? It is all of these. It is the Church building, where you and I meet to worship God, for this is the "house of the Church." It is the congregation, for "where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." It is the Ministerium, and it is the ULC, because you and I have given them the authority to train clergy, to settle disputes, to administer benevolences, and to establish missions at home and abroad.

And yet the Church is more than all of these. For Christians confess, in the Nicene Creed, "one holy catholic and apostolic Church." But what do we mean when we say that? In the first place, quite obviously, we mean that the Church is holy. The Church, we believe, is a communion of saints, of holy people. And you and I are those saints.

Now right here is where a number of people make a big mistake. They think that when we say the Church is holy we mean that church members are good people, people who don't commit the usual sins. And it doesn't take much looking around to see that in fact people inside the Church do commit such sins, that they are not perfect. I know a grocer who has trouble with that problem. He had been brought up in the Church, and had been fairly active in its work. Then one day he caught a prominent member of his congregation trying to sneak out of his store without paying for her groceries. "When that happened," he told me, "I stopped going to Church. If the Church can't teach people to be honest, it's no good. I want no truck with hypocrites." And I think that you and I would be inclined to agree with him.

The fact is, though, that the holiness of the Church does not depend upon you or me. It is not holy because we are holy; it is holy because Christ is holy, and He has made it holy. And it is the communion of saints, not because you and I are models of perfection, but because we have been forgiven - made holy - in Him. "If I look at myself or my neighbor," said

Luther, "the Church will never appear holy. But if I look at Christ Who reconciles and sanctifies it, the Church appears entirely holy, for He has taken away the sin of the world."

Now don't misunderstand me. I don't mean to say that you and I don't have to try to live good honest lives, or to love one another even as Christ has loved us. We do. But the holiness of the Church does not depend on our being sanctimonious prigs who never make mistakes. It is God Who has acted and continues to act here, not we. Men and women did not organize the Church, the way they organize the Elks, or the Rotary, or the American Legion. God called the Church into being. He called it into being to be the body of Christ, and He called its members to be His hands and His feet -- to accomplish His holy purpose on earth. And you and I come into this Church by surrendering ourselves to it and to its Lord, trusting in His love. He comes to us, not we to Him. The late Archbishop Chrysostom of Greece put the whole matter very nicely when he said, "It is the Church that is holy, and this does not mean that it has had none but holy members...(rather) deriving Her holiness from Her head, the Church ever seeks the betterment of Her members." The Church is Christ's, not ours. And for that reason, and no other, the Church is holy.

And this holy Church is also catholic. What a pity that we have allowed the Roman Pope to put a huge capital "C" on that rich word and call it his own! You and I have just as much right to that word as he has. In fact, we ought to use it. For you see, the word "catholic" comes from two Greek words, one meaning "down," and the other meaning "whole" or "entire." And that is precisely what the Church is -- the medium through which God sends His redeeming love down upon the whole world.

But what precisely do I as a Lutheran mean when I say that the Church is catholic? Perhaps the most obvious meaning is that the Church is world-wide. The Church did not belong just in Palestine, where it began on that first Pentecost. And it does not belong today just in the so-called "Western World." The Church belongs to men everywhere. It belongs as much in India as in Spain, in China as in America. For Christ, the Lord of the Church, is Lord of the whole world. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

"Preach the Gospel to every creature." That's another thing I mean by catholicity. And it's a problem that has faced the Church from the very beginning. Were the Apostles, as they scattered over the world, to preach only to Jews, the children of Abraham? Or were they to include also the gentiles? That was the question which faced the first Council of the Church, the meeting of the Apostles in Jerusalem. And they voted to include the gentiles. But the question has popped up again and again. Indeed, it is still very much with

us today. Just about three months ago, I heard of a church - a Lutheran church - where a man has been ostracized because he once suffered a nervous breakdown. And it was only about a year ago that Apostles' Lutheran Church right here in Philadelphia closed its doors. The old German families had moved out into the suturbs. Yet the pastor wasn't allowed to work with the negroes who now live in the neighborhood. And so the congregation died -- died because it refused to be catholic, to "preach the Gospel to every creature."

But when we say that the Church is catholic, we do not simply mean that it stretches out over all the world; then we could call it oecumenical. Nor do we mean simply that it includes every social class and every race, for then we could call it universal. We mean more, much more. We mean that the Church is whole within. The Church - or this or that particular congregation - is catholic only if its inner life is what it ought to be. For it is the love of God that must rule the Church, and not the love of man.

The congregation, then, is the Church if and only if in it men and women are brought together in the love of Christ. But you and I can't do that. You and I in and of ourselves cannot bring men together in love any more than we can make them holy. Christ alone can, and He alone does. The Church is whole in love, and so catholic, just as it is holy -- because Christ makes it so. "Where Christ is," wrote S. Ignatius, "there is the catholic Church." The only difference is this: that though we cannot stain His holiness, we can and often do frustrate His love.

Now this is embarassing. Here we have just said that the word "catholic" means that through the Church God reaches out in love to all men. Now we turn around and say that the same word means that some men, because they block that love of God, are excluded. Worse than that. When we say that the Church must be catholic, we are actually saying that there are some congregations - some so-called churches - that are really not churches at all. And the reason why those congregations are not churches is simply because they refuse to be "whole;" because, in short, they refuse to yield to Christ's love and be vessels of His grace. And when they do that, they become nothing more than fashionable - or not-so-fashionable -- social clubs, serving religiosity on Sunday mornings, and tea to the ladies on Tuesdays. They do not all die out as rapidly as Apostles' Lutheran. Some of them may last for centuries. But they are not whole, and cannot endure forever.

How then are you and I going to tell whether we are whole in love? Is there any way that we can tell whether our congregation is actually a part of the Church catholic? Well, that same Ignatius, who lived very shortly after the time of S. Paul, would probably give this answer: Christ is to be

found, and thus the catholic Church is to be found, in every congregation which possesses the things through which He has promised to reveal Himself to men, and uses them, or rather lets Him use them, in love. Christ promised to be wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name, and He promised to be in the Word and in the Sacraments. He is in Baptism; He is in the Scriptures; He is in sermons and in pious conversation; He is in the Holy Communion. And when you put all that together, stir briskly and pour, you come out with the same definition that Martin Luther came out with four hundred years ago -- that the catholic Church exists wherever the Gospel is rightly preached and the Sacraments rightly administered.

So we come to the next word in the Creed: "Apostolic." Because one of the things we mean when we say that the Church is Apostolic is just this: that in the Church the Gospel is rightly preached, and the Sacraments are rightly administered: preached and administered just as the Apostles taught.

Now that does not mean that we use the same words that they used, as some people seem to think we should. Times have changed. Our whole outlook on the world is different. We today face problems which they never dreamed of. The whole basis of society has shifted. Twentieth-century America is just not first-century Greece. "Ye men of Athens, I see that in all things ye are very religious," would be a pretty slim diet for modern Christians. What apostolicity does mean, though, is that I preach to you the good news about the same Saviour Whom they preached, and the God Who came down into history to save sinners; that I add nothing to and subtract nothing from the revelation which God gave in His Son; and that you receive at the table of the Lord the same Christ Whom the Apostles received.

Saints and heroes, long before us,
Firmly on this ground have stood;

Ground we hold, whereon of old
Fought the faithful and the bold.

But you and I do not simply believe in the same Lord those early Christians confessed; we do not simply hold the ground that they once held. We are today one with them. While you and I are worshipping our Lord on earth, all those who have gone before us in the faith are worshipping Him in heaven. It sounds strange to the modern ear, I know. We much prefer to speak in terms of things that we can see, and touch, and measure. But that is what the Church has always taught. "Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name..." Those who have died in Christ are separated from us only by a little

space; for while we sing His praises here, they are singing the praises of the same Lord there where He is.

And, finally, to say that the Church is Apostolic means one thing more; it means that you and I are sent -- sent to all who do not know our God. For that is the meaning of the word "apostle" - "one who is sent." You and I have been forgiven by God - made holy in Christ. Over the years, in sermon and Sacrament, by the words and actions of the members of His body, Christ has nourished us with His full, His catholic love. But one thing more He has done; He has given to you and to me, as He gave to that first little band of disciples, His apostolic charge. "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." To be holy and to be catholic; these are our privileges; these are the gifts which God has given us. To be apostolic, to be sent into the world to do His work, this is our duty and our opportunity; to speak the word of kindness, to work the work of mercy, to hold out the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to bring men into the Church, that great city of God, whose battlements reach to heaven.

This, then, is the one holy catholic and Apostolic Church, outside of which there is no salvation. This is why I believe in it, and this is why I belong to it: the city of God,

"On Prophets and Apostles built,
And Christ the corner-stone."

* * *

Are You For Real? . . .

NEIN! ANTWORT AN EMIL KULSAR

H. George Anderson

In the Seminarian's last issue John Kulsar ventured into the jungles of philosophy and came out with the assurance of his own existence all stuffed and mounted. Now after following his account of this expedition, I remained unconvinced that he had really bagged his game, so I'd like to assert that the animal is still loose. The certainty of being is still an open question.

Now there are two kinds of certainty. One is logical certainty, and it is only found in mathematics, logic, and statements that "green grass is green." Then there is a sort of psychological certainty that tells us that the sun will rise tomorrow, that next week's stew will have the same taste and color as this week's stew, and that we see the world more or less as it really is. Mr. Kulsar rejects both of these types of certainty by saying that the mind can't prove its

own existence logically any more than the right hand can shake hands with itself, and the mind can't prove its existence psychologically because its very thinking may be an illusion. Just for good measure, he also rejects the evidence of sense perception, so the fact that I can touch myself or see myself is also ruled a possible delusion.

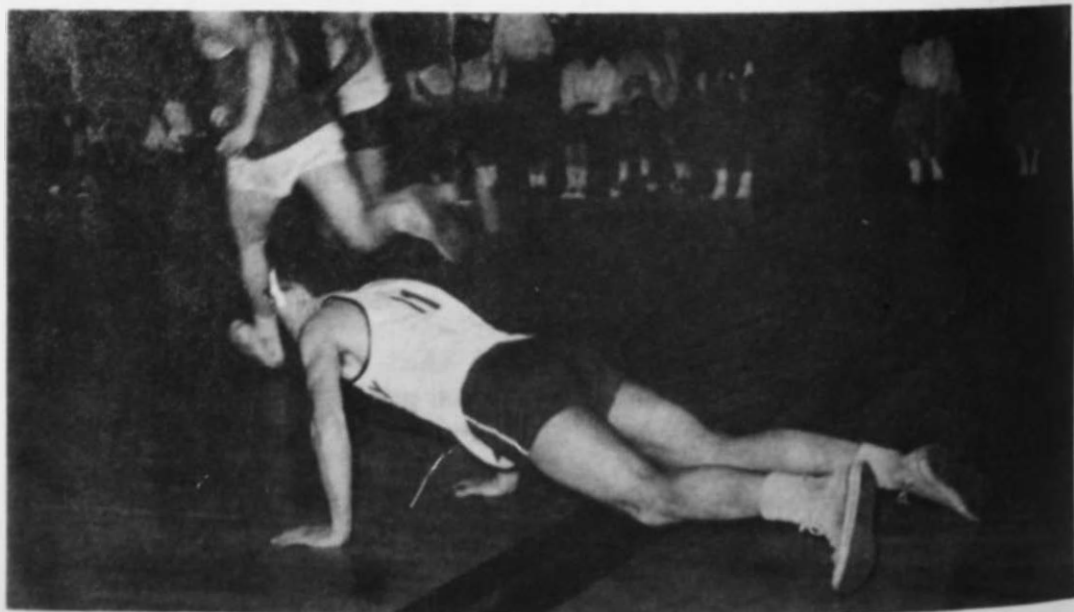
So far, so good. Now we turn to the constructive argument. Four consecutive sentences from the article bear the burden of proof. Here they are: "For man to assert the certainty of his being, he must first declare the existence of God and his creaturely dependence upon Him. But the question may arise, How do you know that the God upon whom you posit your existence exists? The Christian who has been confronted personally by God declares categorically, by faith, that God is. But faith must not be understood as a self-generative principle, and so perhaps illusory, but as a man's total response to the presence of God in his life."

Now let's examine these sentences one by one. The first says that we can only prove our own existence by supposing that there is a God who made us. We now have two beings to account for -- God and ourselves. Mr. Kulsar then asks the obvious question, "How can we be sure that this God exists?" The answer to this question leaves me unsatisfied. He says that we are certain of God's existence through faith and then defines faith as the "total response to the presence of God" in our life. In other words, the validation of this faith lies in our own life and our own response. Now both our life and our responses are known to us through what our memory, our feelings, and our senses tell us. So we are right back where we started. God's existence is known only in our own existence, and as Mr. Kulsar proved earlier in the article, our own existence may very well be an illusion. He has rejected the mind and the senses as valid methods of finding certainty, yet he ultimately needs them both to assert the existence of God. If he can only be certain of God by referring to the very principle he is trying to prove, then the argument becomes circular and inconclusive.

We are left, then, with no certainty of our own existence. True, there may be no logical proof that we do exist, or that God exists, but this actually worries none of us. We still go on thinking, talking, and planning as if our existence were the most certain thing in the world. This psychological certainty is all we need, and the attempt to construct some systematic method of proof will always break on the mystery of creation. If we accept the fact that our existence is given, that God has put us here, and that we can never rationally assert that we grasp our own being, then we can be truly humble and dependent on the Creator and Sustainer of this life.



ANGELS, ALL. Kulsar, Ziegler, Adickes, Hund, Schmidt,
Hitchcock, Acker, Traugott, Frick, Hand.



"Pause that Refreshes"

A Meditation on the Annunciation: March 25 . . .

CALL TO GREATNESS

Robert E. Grochau

Years pass along quickly, and March 25 usually passes by without many people even pausing to note the date. To many the date does not recall any significant event. Most upon being questioned would not be able to say what March 25 signified other than the mistaken answer, "Spring begins on March 25." However, to the Christian Church this day is a Festival. Although it is not a Greater Festival, its importance can not be denied, for it is on this day that we observe the Annunciation.

It was at Nazareth, a small village in the Galilean hills where Christ was later to be raised as a child, that the angel Gabriel came to a young virgin named Mary who was betrothed to Joseph, a descendant of David. The angel informed Mary that she had found favor in the Lord's eyes and said: "The Lord is with thee."

Gabriel could see that Mary was surprised and disturbed at this occurrence as most of us would be on such an occasion. Gabriel sensed this uneasiness and proceeded to calm her by explaining his visitation: "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

What a proclamation to be announced to a young girl!

Mary, like all devout Hebrews, was aware of Isaiah's prophecy of earlier centuries foretelling of the birth of an Immanuel, and now Gabriel announces that her son would be named Jesus: "The Lord is salvation." A revelation like this was incomprehensible to Mary, and she showed her perplexity when she inquired: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" She did not doubt Gabriel's proclamation as Zacharias had done six months before when Gabriel had announced that he would have a son, who would be called John the Baptist. No! Mary did not doubt Gabriel's words, but she was overwhelmed!

This often parallels our own experience. We may feel this overwhelming bewilderment when there is some task to be performed in our service to Christ and the church. With me, this feeling becomes most acute when I am preparing a sermon, or a Bible lesson, or a talk to an organization,

or even in the contemplation of other church duties. It is at this moment that I am overcome most frequently with the enormity of the task. Suddenly, the vastness of our faith is laid strikingly open before me like a Rembrandt painting. I see the beauty and color of its composition; yet the intricacies and complexities are also too realistically present. I am troubled and perplexed, for at this moment my limitations are thrown up to me in distinct contrast to the immense scope of the faith, and the question inevitably comes to mind: "How can I make all this meaningful, for my talents are few, and I know not how?"

Or for us, this feeling of being overwhelmed in the call to the Gospel ministry may only come in our confession and repentance upon self-examination in the light of Christ. It is only in the recognition of our sinful being that this amazement of our being called to service is overwhelming. If the very love of Christ which we preach to His people is forgotten in our relations to fellow Seminarians as we arrogantly cry "idiot" and "boob," then perhaps we are not God's gift to the pulpit and parastate after all. We become blinded by the egotistical delights of a fertile imagination not able to see that God has called us to something greater than exercising a pseudo-superiority over our neighbor. Only in the realization of the greater call of Christ and His church do we have our true mission, -- a task necessitating giving up our sinful delights. It can only be in our repentance that we acknowledge that our neighbor has been called to a greater mission and we to a lesser. We ask: "Have we truly been called to this office?" We wonder if the church correctly called us to His service as we repent of our conceited pride, and suddenly the enormity of the pastoral office is overwhelming. With Mary we are overcome by this calling.

Note in our text now the answer to both Mary's and our feeling of quandry: "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee:"

Here Mary was told how the conception would take place. No longer need she be troubled, for the power of God would overshadow her, and the Holy Ghost would be the agent of the Incarnation.

Thus it is with us when we are going about our Christian charge. The strength of the Holy Ghost is upon us, and the power of God overshadows our work for Him. When we feel that a mission is too great and are overwhelmed by its scope, we should realize that of ourselves the task is immense, but as servants of God we derive our strength from Him. The mission of Christianity was made known to us through Christ and His teachings, and His coming was first made known to us at this Annunciation. Christ gave us our charges which of themselves

overwhelm us, but through the power of God and the strength of the Holy Spirit the mission is made accomplishable. Mary could not understand how she could give birth to a child, for she had known no man. When we are overcome by the assignment of making Christ's teachings relevant and meaningful in a skeptical world of striking indifference, we must realize it is only through the power of God that we can do anything lasting. It is when we are confronted with our own limitations that we are glad that God sent His Son into the world to save us from our own destruction. Then came the Holy Spirit as a comforter to give us strength and power to live out our lives in Christ.

From this account of the Annunciation of the future birth of a Savior, there is one final lesson. After this revelation and assurance of the power of God we note Mary's final words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." Mary was saying in so many words: "All of this is incomprehensible, but I have faith in God and his word." In her response we see surrender in submission to the will of God.

Needless to say, Mary could have rejected all of this story that Gabriel had told her. In those days, if a betrothed woman was found unfaithful, she would be stoned to death. A denial would seem quite natural; yet, her response was one of trust in God.

All too often when we are confronted with the call to service for God, we deny his Lordship. In spite of his instruction of how to live with our neighbor, we'll do it our way, and our way seems to result in darkness before we see the light. An analogy might be found in a sand-lot football game. The quarter-back calls a play for around right end, but you, the half-back, decide you know better. You've spotted a supposed weakness in the center and will go through there for a big gain in spite of the quarter-back. You're thrown for a five yard loss. The next play you decide to buck the line again against the called play in order to prove that your way is wisest. You are thrown for a 10 yard loss. If your team-mates haven't thrown you out, you say submissively to the quarter-back: "All right, you win. You call the plays; I'll follow."

This is precisely what we must do when confronted with God's demand upon our lives. We must realize that He will call the plays, and we must follow and trust his judgment. He has the perspective of the whole field, and controls the time as well. This is what Mary did. She bowed to the will of God by leaving the whole matter in his hands. She was submissive and surrendered, and from the later accounts we see that God did not disappoint her. It is only in such complete surrender that we are given strength to assume our tasks that the Incarnate Son made known while He dwelt among us.

It was in this same spirit of surrender that our Lord prayed His Father's will be done. This led him to the cross, but the cross of victory. When we surrender to the will of God, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to aid us in serving Jesus Christ as we live, study, and witness in this community to our fellow students. If we ignore our Lord's injunction to live in Christian fellowship and continue our petty gossiping and judging and condemning, our lives are a miscarriage and the prayer for this day a still-birth: "...that as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His Resurrection;..." Amen.

PLAYERS PRESENT
"THE SIGN OF JONAH"

Latest production of the Mt. Airy Players, campus thespians, is "The Sign of Jonah."

A result of the resurgence of modern morality and mystery plays in the church, "Sign" is the work of a German Lutheran pastor, who, in 1946, lived outside Berlin.

Unique in that, unlike most religious theatrical productions, it has been a success on the professional stage as well as among church groups, the play is an effort to determine who is responsible for World War II crimes. As such, it points up the crisis of Man.

Dr. Martin Heineken is faculty advisor for the play, directed and cast by John Ziegler.

Presentation is set for Thursday, April 28, at 8:30, in the chapel.

The work has a direct relevance to the German people in particular, but more generally to mankind as a whole.

GERMANTOWN HOME
AND EUROPEAN CHILD
BENEFIT FROM FUND

Germantown Lutheran Home and Save the Children Federation have received equal shares of the Student Body's \$150 Benevolence Fund.

The Home is currently sponsoring a drive known as "Operation Aged." Already underway is the renovation and refurnishing of a building for the accomodation of more aged people. Mt. Airy's contribution is to help in this project.

Save the Children Federation is an international child service agency, supported entirely by voluntary gifts. It is active in America, Europe, Lebanon, Israel, and Korea.

Mt. Airy's gift will be used to provide clothing and food and one year old Bernd Buttner as well as a small cash gift for the German infant's family.

A member of the International Union for Child Welfare, the federation is supported by numerous colleges and universities. Among the National sponsors is Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower.

HEYER COMMISSION DRIVE
\$265 FROM \$450 GOAL

With less than half of the annual Heyer Commission Drive completed, nearly 42 per cent of the \$450 goal has been received.

The \$185 was collected from about 31 per cent of the faculty and student body combined.

Dr. Earl Reber, medical missionary to Liberia, was guest speaker at the Drive's opening, March 2. He presented the urgent call of the "medical needs of Liberia."

Greatest need, said Dr. Reber, is for trained personnel and this help explains the Heyer Commission's decision to raise funds to help pay the expenses and tuition of Liberian student Roland Payne. Mr. Payne is presently studying at the Kansas University School of Medicine.

After completion of his training, he will return to Liberia as the first native Lutheran doctor trained in the U.S.

STUDENTS TO ATTEND
WASHINGTON SEMINAR

Six Mt. Airy men are among the students chosen to attend the Washington Seminar for Lutheran Students.

Selected from Mt. Airy are: James Berg, William Fensterer, Donald Luck, Walter Miller, Albert Schrum, and Walter Hitchcock.

Co-sponsored by the National Lutheran Council and the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, the seminar is to be held April 3-6.

ISM DISCUSSES
"MINISTRY AND SACRAMENTS"

"The Church: Her Ministry and Sacraments" will be discussed along the lines of three traditions: Reformed, Roman, and Free, at the ISM Spring Regional Conference.

Scheduled for April 14-16, the conference is to be held at Crozer Theological Seminary (Reformed), Chester.

Information concerning cost, travel, and speakers is to be announced later.

HENNE TO INTERN
IN VIRGIN ISLANDS

Middle Class President Arthur Henne is scheduled to begin a year's internship in the Virgin Islands July 1.

Henne is the second Mt. Airy man to serve there, and will succeed George Handley, who will return to complete his senior year.

Largest parish in the Caribbean Synod, Frederick Lutheran Church on the island of St. Thomas will be the site of most of his work. Second church in the parish is located on St. John Island. The Rev. James G. Amos is pastor.

Approximately 2,000 miles from Mr. Henne's Marmaroneck, N. Y. home, the church at St. Thomas has an interesting history. Formerly part of the Danish National Church, Frederick Church retains some of the practices of that group, including eucharistic vestments. Mr. Henne, however, will be clothed with the Gospel.

NIEBUHR ON CAMPUS;
STUDIES INSTITUTION

Dr. H. Richard Niebuhr, director of the Special Study of Theological Education in America, visited Mt. Airy's campus March 14 to meet with the administration and faculty in order to review the general objectives, life, and character of the institution.

Closely related to the American Association of Theological Schools, the study, proceeding under a Carnegie Foundation grant, "is not without full and sufficient independence for an objective survey."

Regional distribution, denominational-interdenominational pattern, and the varieties and size of all the schools were considered in selecting the 25 representative school from a total 150.

"KINDERGARTEN, CLOISTER,
OR COMMUNITY?" ASKS
SYMPOSIUM

Under the auspices of Student Body Symposium Committee, a panel of two students and two faculty members discussed the Seminary by facing the question, "Kindergarten, Cloister, or Community?"

Professor John Reumann moderated the March 1 session.

Junior Donald Luck and Dr. Theodore Tappert spoke on the academic side of Seminary life. Presenting the social side were Senior Allan Gibson and Dr. Russell Snyder.

MRS. HAVERSAT ELECTED
WIVES' CLUB PRESIDENT

Mrs. Albert L. Haversat, Jr., was elected Wives' Club president at the March 10 business meeting. Mrs. Edward L. O'Shea was elected 1st vice-president, and Mrs. Durrell J. Seip, 2nd vice-president. New treasurer is Mrs. Gustav A. Wuestefeld.

Secretary and Editorial Representative are to be elected in the fall.

The Rev. Floyd Paules, pastor of Our Saviour Church, Haddonfield, N.J., gave an account March 15 of the experiences of "Children in the Parsonage." Pastor and Mrs. Paules have three children.

On Tuesday, March 29, the Rev. Herbert F. Gernert, Jr., will speak about "Christian Psychology."

At the April 26 meeting, the last regular meeting for the year, Mrs. John Kaelberer will speak on "A Year's Experience as the Wife of an Assistant Pastor."

-- Lea Messner

ALUMNI CONVENE

Annual Alumni Convocation is to be held on Mt. Airy's campus April 13 and 14, report Alumni Association president Theodore L. Fisher.

Relations between synods and the ULC, with respect to Toronto, will be discussed.

Undergraduate Seminary students are invited to attend the convocation. A fee will be charged.

TWO CONVERSATIONS, ONE QUOTE, AND ONE CONTROVERSY

It was an over-the-desk conversation. I was the one party to it. The subject was the challenge that some of our seniors were going to be facing in some of the difficult situations confronting them as they go out in answer to their first calls. I was inclined to be a bit concerned. But back came the answer, "But I think it's wonderful. That way we'll grow giants and not just nice little men!"

* * *

Speaking with a former student just before his graduation a while back, I said, half in question, "You were a Muhlenberg man?" To which he retorted, "I am a Muhlenberg man!" -- Of course he was right. We don't lay aside our background like an old suit. It goes on with us; it continues a part of us. It also suggests the thought that in this day when Muhlenberg is calling for added support, every Muhlenberg man must stand up and be counted, freely acknowledging his continuing obligation.

* * *

In the latest LSA "News Letter," Donald R. Heiges, executive secretary of the Division of Student Service of the National Lutheran Council, concludes with a thought-inspiring quote from "that modern saint and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer," "The Church does not need brilliant personalities but faithful servants of Jesus and the brethren. Not in the former but in the latter is the lack. The Church will place its confidence only in the simple servant of the Word of Jesus Christ because it knows that then it will be guided, not according to human wisdom and human conceit but by the Word of the Good Shepherd."

* * *

There are those who will regret the possible controversy recently begun by Dr. Hans Bolewski, head of the Lutheran World Federation's Department of Information and editor of the journal, "Lutheran World." It will be recalled that he has asked the question whether the Church of Sweden "still can be considered as belonging to the Lutheran world?" The question was inspired by his attendance at the consecration of the new Bishop of Stockholm, Dr. Helge Ljungberg. He further asks, "Does its new interest for the church service and the nature of the Church betray a leaning towards Anglican views rather than the corresponding tendencies in the Lutheran churches?" And again, "Seeing that it has preserved the apostolic succession even after the Reformation, does it not consider itself more

closely allied to Anglicanism than to Lutheranism?"

It appears that at the consecration in question only representatives from churches with apostolic succession took part in the laying on of hands. The Anglican Bishop did; a Bishop from Norway did not.

Archbishop Yngve Brilioth of Sweden resents the implied charge that "the Swedish church has not discharged its duties as a member of the Lutheran World Federation," and says, "However much we value our membership, we cannot consider the federation as a superior authority with the power of curtailing our liberty towards non-Lutheran churches." He further insists that the Church of Sweden "has never left the Lutheran family" and claims that "any distinction between different categories of assisting bishops was wholly unpremeditated." He feels that the circumstance was "due to a private decision by the bishop in question or simply the fact that the number of assisting bishops was so great that they could not all get near enough."

It is, of course, nothing new that the Anglican Church recognizes the apostolic succession in the Church of Sweden. This has been true for thirty-some years. And it is good to hear Brilioth stressing the autonomy of our Lutheran Church bodies. We in America would claim it for ourselves. On the other hand, is not the relationship with other Lutheran churches involved? Must not all the members of any federation bear their fellow-members in mind in all their actions? Is it unrelated, for example, to the cognate issue of the discussions continuing between representatives of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches of India and the representatives of the Church of South India with all its Anglican marks? Archbishop Brilioth remarks that: "we have always been careful to point out to our Anglican friends that our relationship with the Church of England must not entail any change whatever in our connection with the other Lutheran churches." But can it help but do so? And doesn't it all involve some rather fancy tight-rope walking?

There is a basic question to be considered, namely, whether Lutheranism does justice to its own genius and cultus when it engages in certain of these intimacies. In a day when there is more than a little danger of aping Anglicanism in some quarters, or at least taking on some of its color and practice without the fullest consideration of all that is involved, I find myself quite content that Dr. Bolewski has raised the issue. It needs thinking through in more areas than one, with every effort to leave prejudice out of the picture and to think in terms of what is best for the Christian cause and truest to our heritage and the responsibility of our evangelical witness.

Henry H. Bagger