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THE SEMINARIAN

ADVENT 1960



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ΘΕΝΟΣ ΕΝ ✠
ΓΑΣΤΡΙ ΕΞΕΙ
ΚΑΙ ΤΕΞΕΤΑΙ
ΤΙΟΝ, ΚΑΙ ΚΑ-
ΛΕΣΟΥΣΙΝ ΤΟ
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SO IT'S CHRISTMAS AGAIN

Recently in one of the local newspapers one small article bore the caption:

"CARDINAL ASSAILS COMMERCIAL YULE"

As we approach another Christmas, the same feeling will be expressed from many pulpits throughout Christendom. The same observation will no doubt be likewise stressed in The Lutheran and other church periodicals. Certainly one cannot ignore the elaborate secular preparation for the coming holiday, the vast amount of advertising which now floods the mail and appears with increasing space in the newspapers, the over-commercialization of Christmas by the business world, sales promotions geared to stimulate trade during this festive and gala season, and the overall economic crescendo which hopefully thunders to a climax on the eve of Christmas.

Little wonder therefore, that Christians everywhere complain about the secular aspects of the season which detract from "the true meaning of Christmas". We seem to observe helplessly this yearly fervor which permeates our society and yet annually denounce this apparent perversion of "the true meaning of Christmas".

However, lest we as seminarians take up the same hue and cry, should we not enter into the true spirit of the season with a corresponding enthusiasm and preparation, the same zeal and fervor which dominates the business world? Should we not in this Advent season approach Christmas in the true sense of its meaning? Should we not beseech God to "stir up in our hearts" the (often complacent) anticipation of His rebirth in our lives? It is in this way, and in this way only, that Advent assumes its most

significant character, for if we enter into it with true Christian enthusiasm, then Advent becomes an adventure, culminating in the thrilling and exhilarating experience of Christ's re-birth within us at Christmas.

For those who may feel that the over-commercialization is the result of Jewish business interests, perhaps we should point out what G. Ernest Wright had in mind in his book The Challenge of Israel's Faith. We should accept the challenge of our economy-minded brethren and put forth the same energy in our purpose, stressing Christ and His birth and its consequent implications for us as Christians, as the prophets of old did as they lived and urged a preparation for their Messiah.

So it's Christmas again, but as we here in the Seminary often become involved in the issues of high church versus low church, of authority, and of ecumenical movements, and all the other aspects within an already confused world, may we in this Advent season implore Him to "cast out our sin, and enter in", that we "may be accounted worthy...to stand before the Son of Man". In this way and with this rededication to divine inspiration, may each of us on Christmas then share the thought which Charles Wesley so well expressed in one of his hymns:

"Forth in thy Name, O Lord, I go
My daily labor to pursue,
Thee, only thee, resolved to know,
In all I think, or speak, or do."

ADVENT

"Lift up your eyes to the heavens
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment
and they who dwell in it will die like gnats;
but my salvation will be forever,
and my deliverance will never be ended."

Isaiah 51:6

The Fall of the year is a disconcerting season for those who like neatness--the husks of Summer's fruitage strewn about, slowly accomplishing the last few steps toward non-existence. The world seems so sensible in Spring when, cell upon cell, chaos forms itself into larger and more complex units, when the seed and youth imprint upon the void a reason for being, and an exciting reason at that. It's easy then to understand Winter, one can even be philosophical about Fall. But when you are in the midst of it, facing an infinity of leaves, it's difficult not to despair.

We are living in the Autumn of Western Culture. Supposedly our storehouses are full--so many generations of thought cannot have perished! And yet, there is no substitute for the apple picked and eaten the same hour, a joy we so lately knew.

Don't ask me to prove that we live in the Fall--I was not here last Spring. I know it must have been though; I have learned to see its remains; its shadows in the corners of today; I have heard echoes of it in the voices of my teachers; I have overheard its conversations in those tombs called books---and that is why I know that Winter is near.

There are some late blooms in the garden, frost-bitten buds. In their twelve tone stream of Freudian consciousness they advertise that even if life was once possible, it is no longer.

Then, at seedtime, why should we have sought the origin of the seed? Now, harvest past, the need to impregnate contradicts dry loins.

"Old man", Nietzsche might say, or Camus, "there is no such thing as that life you want to create. You never had the germ of eternity within you. The days of reality are dry. Whether you were then or not, now you are old--and absurd."

It's all these leaves, however, that are so disturbing, and bare branches against the sky. We turn to them (the inertia of habit) for the protection and nourishment that are no longer there. Most of us know something is wrong, but we dare not admit it. My neighbor seems quite satisfied eating rotten apples. Here is another under an oak tree seeking shade on a December day.

These neighbors of mine, I suppose, have a deeper sense of the life that was than I do. Indeed, they become somewhat impatient with me, staring into the noonday sun. It was right, I guess, for the apple to have been nourishment and the oak to have been shade, but they no longer are, nor should be. It was right for Plato to be Platonic, Aquinas to be Thomistic, or Luther to be Lutheran,---but I will not eat rotten fruit nor give it to others. I want no shade nor will I afford any from the bleary disc so red and cold on the horizon.

Ezekiel saw such decaying bones take flesh again and live. Perhaps we too shall live to see that day. Until the trump announces the miraculous, I suggest we learn to wait. To wait is not to ask 'why' or 'when'. To wait is not to dream. But to wait is to be cold. So let us warm ourselves by the flame of burning brush. Let us build a bonfire of the past and gain strength from knowing it is dead. Mararatha!

DEFINITIONS IN SEMI-ARABIANESE

- Hippolytus.....A rather heavy early church father.
- Polycarp.....A productive fish found in the
Mediterranean.
- Didache.....Yiddish for menu.
- Synoptic Problem.....How to pass New Testament.
- Form Criticism.....What happens at the Lankenau dances.
- Marduk.....A spread with tea and bread.
- Adjective.....Enemy of the noun, friend of the
student.
- Kaddush.....What one Israelite says to a-
nother after he has sneezed.
- Deutsche Messe.....German Mess.
- Greek.....A contraction of the Latin phrase,
"We who are about to die salute you."
- Deponents.....What Greeks take off their income
taxes.
- Declension.....That sharp division that takes place
between the student and the subject
after the first two weeks.
- Voice.....The art of resonating, packing it in
behind the belt, breathing from the
diaphragm, projecting the voice,
keeping the mouth moist, not drop-
ping the "d's", and grabbing the
floor with your feet...while appear-
ing calm.

With ruler and pen and
Thesis--antithesis--synthesis
They have erected Him. Ch
We need not fear now, for
The words are spoken
mapped
diagrammed
systematized
categorized
homogenized
digested.

The vast puzzle has been solved.
All the pieces fit
And I am just the Seventh
One down and the Seventh one
Over.

How simple. Such truth.

Three years to memorize this puzzle and then
my coat of arms will be glued on--
heavens, of course not tattooed.
And soon we shall merge.
Just imagine how many more
Words we shall have. It just
Captivates the intellect.

"In the rooms they come and go.
talking of Michaelangelo."

In the Year of Our Lord 1962
The work will be nearly finished
As the decent swallows the indecent.
The briefcases have more compartments.
"Naturally, we proclaim" these words.

Does anyone have needle and thread? We shall
repair the veil. It's too
Cluttered, hanging there--why, it's almost
blasphemous.

On second thought, why don't we just tear
it down, because it really
Does not belong.

"contradicts"

"sloppy thinking"

"intellect should and does"

2000 7 10 1970
2000 7 10 1970

Worship of regulated delivery. Define it, for
our life must be
Soberness and Sense.

And the Word became words, and dwelt among us,
that we might possess him.

"...Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the
inspiration of thy Holy Spirit that we may..."
Kyrie eleison.

2000 7 10 1970

Calvin C. Tucker

REFORMATION SUNDAY, 1960...IN RETROSPECT

Several years ago, the Protestant Episcopal Church had a national convention at which the following ditty was sung: (tune: "God Bless America")

"We are the Anglicans, we are P.E. ;
Neither High Church, nor Low Church,
But Protestant, Catholic and free.
We're not Presbys, we're not Loothersn ;
We're not Baptists, white with foam ;
We are the Anglicans, we are F.E. ;
We are the Anglicans, via media, Boom, Boom."

Taking my cue from a Canterbury which seems to want to be "all things to all men", lest any man should find "the stumbling-block" within its walls, I should like to consider a situation in our churches which was very clearly revealed on Reformation Day, 1960.

For the Lutheran Church, this was the day of the "bland" sermon par excellence. That which properly arose out of a desire to produce politically non-partisan sermons, generally seems to have manifested itself in sermons which went to extremes to say little and to offend none.

From mutual conversation with the brethren, I was forced to conclude that there were many sermons preached on this day which were as equally insipid as that which I had the misfortune of hearing.

The preaching of such sermons on this particular Reformation Sunday was not, in itself, an especially terrible thing. I do believe that the historical implications of this festival ought not to be ignored, but I do not wish to suggest that this festival should be an annual occasion for singularly vehement polemics. My objection, however, lies with what seems to be a general tendency within our congregations to forget the very real prophetic character of the Church's ministry--to forget that we are PROTESTANTS.*

*For the sake of clarity, I shall concede the word "PROTESTANT" to mean something quite different from the common term of derision, "P.O.T", although both are etymologically from the same root.

The irenic spirits who seem so concerned with minimizing any differences within Christendom have given rise to a question which demands an answer, for therein lies any justification for the existence of a Luthern Church. I think that the question can adequately be posited as: "Are there any real and legitimate differences between the various branches of Christendom?"

If there are no such differences, then there is no justification for the various denominations which exist. If there are no real differences, then we have all been guilty of a most heinous sin by our continuing denominationalism, which becomes merely our prideful grasping after our vested interests in a multitude of trivialities.

If, on the other hand, the differences are real and basic to our fidelity to the word of God, we ought not to minimize or ignore these differences, for neglect then becomes tantamount to infidelity.

Obviously, I believe that there are real differences between the Lutheran Church and other bodies of Christendom. To borrow a phrase, I believe that "we are founded in protest; and, gentlemen, we are still protesting". I believe that these differences are incontrovertably involved in the Gospel being rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered.

We Lutherans are PROTESTANTS, and the prophetic character of Christ's Church demands that we remain so! To be sure, I would not advocate that this be considered our sole task, but it is certainly an inescapable part of our sole task.

From what has been said thus far, perhaps it appears that I would wish to return to the bitter polemics of Chemnitz and Gerhard. Such is not my intention. In its enlightenment, our Church has wisely passed from the days when men sang:

"Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort,

Und steuer des Papsts und Türken Mord..."

and then hasten without the church crying, "Bomb the cathedral!"

On the other hand, I think that our faithfulness to God's Word constrains us to recognize that there are more errors in Rome which must be protested to day than in 1517. The superficial vices of sacerdotal immorality and the sale of indulgences have been subdued, but only to be replaced with the idolatries of papal infallibility and an unscriptural BVM who threatens to replace our redeeming Lord Christ as the "Redemptrix" of the world. The old errors of the Papists still stand, and they have been magnified with time.

Yet, lest we deal with only a part of our prophetic task, I would hasten to point out that we also protest the errors of Geneva, Canterbury, Straszburg and wherever else we may find them. The perverted inroads made into Protestantism by pulling Pietism have resulted in a kind of Protestant "Works Righteousness" that is every bit as synergistic, and even more insidious, than that of a theocratic clericalism and the "Sweet Jesus" figure which is so rampant in "The Most Wasted Hour of the Week" and on the tables of wares hawked by the church houses.

That we have failed to make clear protests of these aberrations is evinced by the number of our members who calmly accept the FROT-American dictum that "it doesn't matter what a man believes, so long as he is sincere". These same people, then, go on to relinquish their Lutheran heritage with great ease whenever it becomes more convenient to join a non-Lutheran congregation because of its social status, geographical location or a popular preacher who doesn't make disturbing demands involving their faith.

The dangers confronting the Church in godless secularism and anti-religious totalitarianism are so obvious that they require no detailed recognition. Perhaps in this last area alone has the Church partially fulfilled its prophetic calling.

Truly we are surrounded by a multiplicity of "anti-christs", for each and every one of these may properly be so named. The "anti-christ" is not only he who is "against" Christ, but more appropriately for today he

that would be "instead of" Christ. On reflection, one cannot help be reminded of the Blessed Reformer's words: "Though devils the whole world should fill, all seeking to devour us..." (Which words, incidentally, have also been watered down in the SBH paraphrase.)

At this point, however, lest I wrongfully be labeled a "Crypto-Orthodoxist in sheep's clothing", I hasten to add that we Lutherans are not the proud possessors of a "reine Lehre" either. One need think back no farther than Atlantic City to realize that we must also bear the yardstick of fidelity to the Word of God in judgment upon ourselves. And if we do so, we shall find in ourselves many things that cry for correction. Time and space preclude an enumeration of such wrongs, but we dare never forget that the "sword of Judgment" is two-edged. The voices within our councils seem strangely silent about our own shortcomings, although it is never sufficient for us merely to cry "wee" in the sanctity of a gemütliche Kaffeeklatsch! Surely, we Lutherans have not become so enamoured of quietism that there remain none among us to speak forth in our conventions.

Where then, does all of this lead? I think that we are faced with several unavoidable conclusions.

First, we must revitalize our awareness that we are PROTESTANT Church. As such, we are continually called to repudiate the several attractive and subtle distortions of the Gospel in clear terms. We do still "condemn and deny" the arrows of Rome, Canterbury, Geneva, etc. Or at least we ought to!!!

Secondly, we dare not vitiate our own vital witness by failing to stand in a perpetual and an active judgment of ourselves. We must always be ready to correct our own strayings as completely and as rapidly as we are able to detect them.

Finally, we must acknowledge that we live in a tension which both demands our proper concern about the divided Body of Christ, and which also prevents us from becoming so attracted by the thoughts of union that we choose silence at the expense of ignoring distortions of the Gospel. Unthinking compromise for the mere sake of

an illusory organic unity can never be a legitimate part of the Church of the Augsburg Confession.

The Church has permitted its prophetic voice to become so muted, that were He present on the contemporary scene, the Lord might well be moved to remark, "Ihr habt einen andern Geist als wir". To remove the prophetic task from the ministry of the Church is to perpetrate an emasculation of the Word which comes with Judgment as well as with Grace. The Word constrains us to heed anew the words, "The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?"

VENI, EMMANUEL

O come, O come Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel;
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by thine advent here;
Disperse the glooms clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel. Amen

MERGER IN PERSPECTIVE

It is both amazing and inspiring to watch the eagerness with which delegates to a church convention attack the task of voting their church out of existence. This, of course, is a task not too frequently called for. The delegates to the convention of the United Lutheran Church in America, solemnly and otherwise assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, rose admirably to the challenge before them. It is not every delegate who has the opportunity to cheerfully participate in his church's demise.

The demise, of course, was helped along somewhat by the promise of a bigger and better life to come. To be sure, all this was to be fulfilled in history - June, 1962, to be precise - and this was an area where a number of delegates felt a certain uneasiness of being on foreign territory. But within or beyond history, the real vote was not so much for the demise of the U.L.C.A. as for the birth of a new church.

Now a good portion of the foundations for this new church had already been well established. There was, for example, the matter of a name. It was in areas such as this - rather than in the ivory towers of theology - that the real birth pangs of the new church were felt. Unfortunately, the most promising name of all was rejected, and delegates did not even have the opportunity to accept the new: "United Lutheran and Evangelical Protestant Church in America and Adjacent Nation(s)". The proposal for a new church came to Atlantic City with a much simpler label, the Lutheran Church in America. Several delegates were heard to remark that this will indeed put Missouri in its place. Whether it will again raise the bloody question of states' rights is still to be seen. At any rate, the call to the states to join the Union was clear.

Much more interesting preparation, however, had gone into still another practical matter. Here, too, the theologians were gleefully locked outside the room until the more important problems had been taken care of. This was the matter of fraternal organizations. It seemed some were for, and some against, and under the absolute standard of Unity a compromise was in order.

The compromise, some felt, came out quite un-Lutheran but strongly pro-Unity. However, that is neither here nor there, for the theologians were still waiting in the hall. It seems that it became necessary to call them in when someone discovered the wording of the compromise made it impossible for a conscientious pastor to also be a member of the Church. Several of the theologians were heard to cough feebly as they entered the smoke filled room, but by Atlantic City they had quite overcome this disturbing tendency.

Preparation for the new church had been carefully carried out in many sections of the church, and the resolution presented at Atlantic City indeed represented a good many hours of gruelling labor. After a careful and concise study, Somebody prepared a statement that would be incorporated first of all into the few remaining years of the U.L.C.A.'s life. This dealt, in short, with a pastor's obligation to keep in confidence all information given him in confidence, unless he could prevent a crime by revealing the truth. Full of the new spirit of merger, delegates at first tried to re-word this into a demanding and exacting bit of canon law that would obligate every pastor to: "With-hold all information given him in confidence unless he is asked to disclose it, or unless he otherwise wishes to disclose it". This injunction, although binding on every pastor, would in no way be construed as mandatory. Unfortunately, the spirit of the new church broke down at this point, and when Somebody

made known the detailed study and work Somebody had put into the statement, it was accepted nearly as proposed. The statement would also be part of the new Lutheran Church in America's bylaws.

Other highlights on the road to merger were both numerous and exciting. To the untrained observer they were also confusing. The Church decided it ought indeed to say something about nuclear weapons, and turned a little awkwardly to the theologians for some help. The theologians, obviously pleased at being accepted back into the fold, replied with some ringing defenses of a statement prepared by the Board of American Missions. It was no surprise to find the theologians noisily rejoicing about town when the statement passed. They deserved the moment of rejoicing, for they were not to fare as well on capital punishment.

Capital punishment is a ticklish issue, and of course much too complicated to discuss here. What the delegates gathered in Atlantic City did, however, is a horse of another color. They did nothing at all. Now it is perhaps unfair to say they did nothing at all, for they were very busy, and they did take valuable time to do a great deal of talking about the issue. Everybody knows there were other things to think about as well, and a Luther League play or a series of forty-six speeches by visiting missionaries are much easier to take than a good solid statement on capital punishment. As one delegate was heard to remark: "If Chessman had only held out a little longer, we would've made it!" As it turned out, neither Chessman nor the statement made it, one losing by a small cyanide pellet and the other by ten votes. The theologians were off champagne and back on beer, and the convention was ready to adjourn.

The march toward merger will continue, for its final goal is still nearly two years away.

So for those who have found the march every bit as entertaining as Red Skelton or Huckleberry Hound, there is still the promise of exciting and amusing events yet to come. The United Lutheran Church in America was born to die, and the date of her demise is fast approaching. The new Lutheran Church in America is becoming clearer and clearer, as step by step the new replaces the old. Even the theologians, peering out of their fox holes from time to time, may find the transition enlightening.