

Library

10
1954 Q2

THE SEMINARIAN

Vol. xxiii

November 29, 1961

No. 12

DR. BAGGAR RESIGNS

On November 21, Dr. Baggar, president of the Seminary, sent his letter of resignation to the Board of Directors. (A copy of this letter is posted on the Faculty bulletin board on the first floor of Hagen Hall.)

The letter refers to the Board meeting of November 1959, at which Dr. Baggar indicated that in view of his approaching the mandatory retirement age of seventy he would be ready to retire any time the Board felt most advantageous, especially in regard to the merger discussions with Gettysburg Seminary. The Board at that time apparently agreed that no special advantage would be had by Dr. Baggar's retirement before the usual time.

Dr. Baggar's letter also indicated that the Seminary is definitely "on the verge of a major turn in our affairs." A decision in the merger negotiations with Gettysburg is approaching. The Seminary's centennial will be celebrated in 1964, in connection with which a major financial appeal must be planned and entered upon in the near future. For all these tasks Dr. Baggar feels that a new president is "imperatively needed."

The president's letter states that he wishes his resignation to become effective no later than Dec. 31, 1962, or any time prior to that if his successor is ready to assume the office. "It is apparent to me that, though blessed with health and strength of mind and body, any creative imagination I ever had is now largely a matter of imagination alone, that I have lost a good measure of the resilience of youth, and that my humor, though abundant, is probably wearing thin -- or just wearing." The letter regrets "that the years of my service have perforce proved too largely a holding operation rather than the fulfillment of my dreams and desires for the seminary."

At its meeting on November 21, the Board accepted Dr. Baggar's resignation.

MERGER PREPARATIONS CONTINUE

As final plans are made for the convention which will bring into existence the Lutheran Church in America, changes on the synodical level must also be effected. An indication of this came with the announcement last week of the dates for the constituting conventions of the 31 synods of the new 3,200,000 member body.

Nearly 6,000 congregations of four Lutheran bodies merging to form the new church are included in 30 geographical synods and one non-territorial synod (Slovak) in the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. The convention dates were announced by the Rev. Dr. Martin E. Carlson, Minneapolis, deputy to the Rev. Dr. Malvin H. Lundeen, chairman of the Joint Commission on Lutheran Unity. The merging convention of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Augustana Lutheran Church, the United Lutheran Church in America and the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (Suomi Synod) will be held in Detroit, Michigan, June 28 to July 1, 1962.

A list of convention dates of synods represented in the student body of Mt. Airy, and the meeting places, as announced by Dr. Carlson, follows:

Caribbean, Oct. 3-4, San Juan, Puerto Rico; Central Pennsylvania, Oct. 3-4, Harrisburg, Pa.; Eastern Pennsylvania, Oct. 5-6, Allentown, Pa.; Florida, Oct. 1-2, De Land, Fla.; Iowa, Sept. 6-7, Des Moines, Ia.; New England, Sept. 4-5 Worcester, Mass.; New Jersey, Sept. 12-13, Ocean City, N.J.; New York, Sept. 4-5, Albany, N.Y.; Ohio, Sept. 14-15, Columbus, O.; Slovak, Oct. 5-6, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Western Pennsylvania, Sept. 17-18, Greenville, Pa.

STUDENT LISTS AVAILABLE

Copies of the current list of all enrolled students with their addresses are available from Mrs. Prigge in the front office.

UNITY



The New Delhi Assembly is well under way now. Fortunately a good deal of factual coverage has been done by the newspapers, so we are aware of the reception of the Russian Church into WCC membership and of the consolidation of missionary efforts.

But behind these developments, as well as the discussions and speeches which are reported, there is much in the way of 'depth' reporting which must be done. Two points have arisen of which this is especially true.

First, it is reported with what I thought was a supercilious air by AP that the invitation to Holy Communion extended by the Anglican Church of India was met with anything but a unity of response. For Christians to whom this consternation on the part of many groups is understandable yet tragic, the scorn of a secular commentary is keenly felt. There is a poignant note in one Eastern bishop's statement that Communion is a sacrament of unity not a way of achieving it. That statement makes graphic the fact that the unity we seek just is not present. Although many feel that the Sacrament can be used in a missionary way, at least with other Christians, there is certainly a lot to be said for preserving the rite from the realm of devices and means. The Anglican Church of India is to be commended, I think, in having made this offer - a remarkable move for the Anglican Communion. But at the same time we sadly appreciate the necessity some felt to abstain at this point.

The second report, of special interest on the 'acceleration' debate, will be discussed in a future column.

George Weckman

Sam Seminarian Reports...

ABOUT A FARM



As I was traveling on an ancient cobble-stone road I saw a small German farm snuggled among many tall and old trees situated on a slight rise. I decided to visit for a while and was in for a surprise.

A few weeks ago some of the animals on the farm got a bit restless. It seems that the horses had decided to wear some new blankets which they thought would add much to the life of the farm. Some of the horses were particularly proud of their blankets and enjoyed showing them off. Also, the horses changed a few of the farm customs -- the reasoning being either one of two types: for brightening the scene or for making life on the farm more meaningful.

In reaction to these actions on the part of the horses, the oxen took exception to the horses' apparently high-hat ways. Perhaps the oxen had a legitimate complaint, or perhaps they were simply reacting to anything creative or new -- but in any event they reacted unfavorably. The grunts and groans were quite readily audible when the animals came together for chow or when they went out into their respective pens and fields.

Soon the grunts and groans became louder, and the animals began fighting with one another. During the process the chickens cackled louder than ever with their usual ability to say nothing; the geese stretched their long necks to see what was going on; while others, such as the "wise" (?) old owl, choose to stay out of the conflict altogether. And in the midst of the conflict, the lamb was killed...but this didn't matter. This did not discourage the other animals...they continued in their meaningless struggle.

 The Seminarian is published weekly during the academic year by the Student Body of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, 7301 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia 19. Editor: R.J. Zimmerman; Associate Ed. J.R. Kehrli; Writers: C. Crumpton, L. Miller, B. Thorpe, G. Weckman.

PH: The emotional is lower than the intellectual.

PH: The Bible is a simple book.

PH: One cannot lose one's self.

PH: All of life is determined by thought.

Report from Kirkridge

Three Mt. Airy men felt bold enough a few weeks ago to consider themselves called to "unconventional ministries", or at least that was the implication of their response to attend a retreat over the Thanksgiving holiday. It was held in Bangor, Pa., on a 350-acre tract with rustic farmhouse, mountaintop lodge, and warm Christian spirit, all of which made the two days there very enjoyable and inspiring.

This retreat center was established in 1942 as a place where social and devotional radicals could get together. The Kirkridge group, as well as the 38 seminarians who attended this retreat, were of many denominational backgrounds, but their goal was the same—a renewal of the Church's vitality both in its interior life and in its effect on, and conversion of its society.

The retreat was grounded in morning and evening devotions, hymn singing, and silence. The rest of the time was spent in Bible study, discussion of the various vocations to which each felt drawn, and a very informative review of some of the programs scattered throughout the Church the goals of which were similar. The latter included Sigtuna in Sweden, Iona Community in Scotland, Taize in France, the Evangelical Academies of Germany, the East Harlem Protestant Parish, and many others.

It was encouraging to hear of this work as well as the ambitions of the seminarians in extending the Church's concern to the daily life of its members through industrial programs and to the deepening of Christian experience both in the parish and on campus.

The implicit comparison between the retreat and the seminaries from which we came did not go unnoticed. The very capable leader of the program, John Oliver Nelson of Yale Divinity School, remarked that the problem of American seminaries is not the quality of teaching which is better than it ever has been, but morals and dedication. This statement met with unanimous consent. But there was at the same time the realization that seminarians too live the paradox of desiring heaven for a climate but hell for company.

The main brunt of attack was the sub-

urban church whose activities seem at variance with the work which those present expected in the Church. This was perhaps to be expected from a group of men who have chosen "unconventional ministries", but it also indicates the criticism of the status quo which so many are beginning to express. Our total impression, however, was not one of defeat, for there pervaded the whole conversation a spirit of hope and trust in what God can do through willing agents.

This report cannot really give you the benefits which we received at Kirkridge, but you may indeed share with us the joy of this informative and strengthening experience.

Charles Ziegler
Lee Miller
George Weckman

Biblical Play Reviewed"I AM THE LORD, GIDEON."

Broadway's Plymouth Theatre is the scene of an exciting and stimulating new play, Paddy Chayevsky's Gideon. Based on the well-known story in Judges 6-8, the play should be of interest to all Christians.

The play opens with a group of Israelites, led by Joash the father of Gideon, praying and making sacrifices to Baal for deliverance from immanent destruction by the Midianites. At this point the angel of the Lord (Fredric March) appears to Gideon (Douglas Campbell). The angel addresses Gideon as a "mighty man of valor." Gideon, a stoop-shouldered and humble peasant, is very much aware of his physical and mental limitations. Thus, it is much to his chagrin that the Angel informs him that he will be the instrument through which God will save Israel in this dark hour.

Gideon is keenly aware of the fact that it will take a miracle for the Israelites to defeat the Invaders. The Angel assures Gideon that God will accomplish this saving act. This miracle is to be a sign of His love and continuing presence. It is to show them that God alone is sovereign of all creation. In return for this, He wants nothing less than complete obedience to His will.

The Angel unfolds the plan by which a mere 300 Israelites (all of them cowards, (continued on p. 4, column 1)

"I AM THE LORD, GIDEON" - continued

led by Gideon) will rout and slay some 120,000 Midianite warriors. The miracle comes to pass just before the conclusion to the first act.

It is in the second act that the most theologically significant action of the play occurs. Now that Gideon has been raised in stature because of his role in the victory, the mood changes. Confessing to the Lord that he is in reality a vain man, Gideon wants a tangible symbol of his success. Gideon's images of grandeur are further intensified by his compatriots who begin to clamor that he should become King of Israel. Some even go so far as to fall down and worship him. The pressures exerted by his fellows are too much for Gideon. He succumbs and accepts the kingship. God had expressly commanded him not to do this. However, Gideon being only too human, sets his will over against the will of God. He proclaims that he wants to become like God. "By becoming King, Lord, I can become significant like you."

As the play progresses, one sees that Gideon and Israel only have significance as human beings when they recognize their absolute dependence upon God. When Gideon openly rejects God ("I don't love you Lord, because you remind me of my insignificance...you are too big a concept", the signs of ultimate despair begin to set in. Gideon and his fellows claim that victory came because of socio-economic and political conditions. (How terribly modern this sounds!) God's saving act is rejected. Yet, despite this, God still proclaims his love for Israel. He knows that His love has been rejected. So, in one of the play's most moving scenes the Angel says that God will become a God of wrath. If He cannot hold His people by means of love, He will hold them by means of fear.

Wesley Hamlin

(Ed. Note. A critique of the performance of Gideon and the issues it raises will be presented in next week's issue of The Seminarian.)

Unexpected Cooperation

Once again it's that time of year - you know: when myriads of paper angels, who sound marvelously like the Roger Wagner Chorale, hover adoringly over racks of \$3.98 dresses on sale for \$5.98. Anyone could tell from that description that Christmas is approaching. And once more, the age-long battle, enjoyed by one and all (sure cure for getting rid of hostilities), between clergy and merchants is taken up. In some communities truces have already been reached and the white surplice waved; but in most the battle roars on with all sorts of gusto. One party carries the slogan, "Keep Christ in Christmas"; the other, "Give her a Christmas she'll always remember."

Usually church publications turn their attention on the evils of the businessman at this time of year. But a little inspection of the matter reveals that things are not nearly so black-and-white as they have been made to seem. If the businessmen ever do forget the Almighty Dollar and turn to Holy Church (as we've been begging them to), what will they find in the way of Christmas observance?

One wonders why the Executive Secretary of the ULCA Department of Worship advocates that the churches make nothing special out of Christmas observance this year. Perhaps he's been to some of the parish Christmas services. If there's any service given over to the religious observance of motherhood, babyhood, strawhood, and animalhood (with concomitant themes of shepherdhood, angelhood, starryhood, and kingdom) it's Christmas in the old rugged church. Candles, the old old old and gentle carols, the choir anthems, those wonderful Old Testament predictions of where, when, how and why Jesus of Nazareth would be born, the sermon: "Commentary on Candlelight" or "Where were YOU since last Christmas", etc. (unfortunately)-all combine to give countless parishes a lovely Christmas.

Externals per se are meaningless, but they do point.