

Table Talk

News and Views of the Student Body of The Lutheran
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THE FOLLY OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

I Cor. 4:10. "We are fools for Christ's sake, while you are such sensible Christians."

This is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Millions of people all over the world pray daily for Christian unity, but this week is set aside each year to gather up all our pleas that God will reunite his Church and make his people one again. This passage from I Cor. is one of the key sections in the New Testament on unity, and it is especially interesting for it lays bare the cause of disunity and points to God as the source of unity. But it comes as something of a surprise to see that Paul's words about "fools for Christ" is part of the same section.

What does being a fool for Christ have to do with the unity of the Church? For Paul the relation is clear; through fools for Christ God creates unity. Just as the world failed to find God by its wisdom, and found him by the folly of the Cross; so it is not the sensible Christians who, by their wisdom, lead us to unity, but the fools, those who trust in the power and strength of God.

We seldom talk of the unity of the Church on this campus. Surely we speak about community and fellowship, we are exhorted to love one another, we are encouraged to understand those communions who are separated from us. But it is only infrequently that we talk seriously about the ecumenical movement, unity among Lutherans, or the meaning of unity for our life here at the seminary. Perhaps unity is not the most pressing issue at present: what really should come first is civil rights, social action, the war in Viet-Nam, or the secular city. Perhaps we assume that unity does exist, and we can move on to other things.
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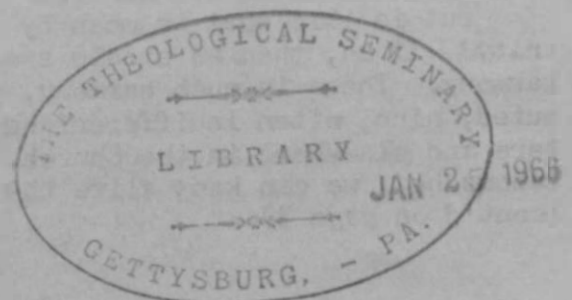
FACES

I cannot help but see their faces always now. Even to live is a strain; there are all the faces. The Johnny's and Lao Ky's and all their fellows in this nightmare of terror. The face of the boy whose father will fly no more, nor even write a letter home at Christmas, or the brother who hunter once for rabbits but now returns home from the hunt, cold and still. Everywhere there are the faces. The face of fear when falling bombs or prodding bayonets or burned over fields make no place safe, when nightmares stalk the land of daytime unreality, and nothing is real. Or the barren wailing faces of mothers left alone on mounds or rock and emptiness, and life is a meaningless term. Everywhere their faces haunt me, and thousands of unknown faces keep me from sleep or indifference. What if it happened here, and the faces were my own--could I neglect them? Can I ever turn away from my brothers' faces? The faces turn to me and silent ask "Why?". Abba. . . what of the faces?

Barry Bence

VIETNAM

Senator Wayne Morse will speak at the Forum in Harrisburg on Sunday, February 20th at 3 P.M. His topic is--"Vietnam." Students interested in attending should contact Dr. Wilken.



UNITY (Cont'd from page 1)

Perhaps we are afraid of unity, true unity as Paul describes it here.

"I appeal to you, my brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: agree among yourselves, and avoid divisions; be firmly knit together in mind and thought." This puts the matter rather forcibly. Be knitted together in unity of mind and in judgment. Paul uses here the image of healing, mending, binding; be knit together that nerve and muscle, blood and tissue work together, bound by a common spirit, a common mind, a common purpose. Be one. In short he speaks of total unity, complete, full, perfect unity. He does not have in mind a kind of political unity, nor outward or external commonality, nor a unity of expediency, an accidental or temporal joining of hands for the moment to accomplish an end, but which ceases when the task is done. Have a common mind, but have it for the same reasons.

It does not take a fool to find political unity; for unity by experience demands clever, wise, sensible men--men who know how interests can be bent to serve one moment, and just as quickly forgotten. It does not take a fool to see that one church is better than three in a small rural community; it does not take a fool to work out comity arrangements on the fringes of our cities; it does not take a fool to see that half a dozen denominations on the mission field splinters and fragments our witness. These are the thoughts and conclusions of wise and sensible men, men who can read the signs and act accordingly. Nor does it take a fool to see that there is something ludicrous about LCA, ALC and Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. And it does not take a fool to see that 200 people on a few acres of ground in daily contact must give and take a little if we are to work together.

But is this what we mean by unity? If so, then we should speak of harmony. There is much harmony, polite, muted, nice, often indifferent harmony here and elsewhere in the Church. On campus he we can keep alive the rumor (cont'd on page 3)

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HOW STUDENTS RATE PROFESSORS

(Editor's Note: During the Christmas Vacation Dr. Heiges passed this article along to Table Talk.)

Dr. Harold G. Shane, professor of education, Indiana University, Bloomington, in a report article published in the NEA JOURNAL, November 1965, pp. 18-20, expressed the belief that much of the "unrest among students stems from dissatisfaction with their classroom experiences and their relationships with their professors." He goes on to relate the opinions of some three hundred students in twenty-one colleges and universities, which he gathered during the past two years. He admits that his study has no pretense of being scientific but he believes the points of view of these students merit a respectful hearing. Here follows some of the opinions and suggestions of the students which indicate rather clearly how students rate their professors. It would seem that these opinions are equally true for professors in theological seminaries.

- Professors should be discouraged from reading their lecture notes closely.

- Professors should avoid repeating in lectures material that is in the assigned text-book.

- Professors should avoid constantly telling jokes, ramtling on about personal experiences, or just plain rambling.

- Courses should be organized constructively, so that at the end of the term, semester, year, the students will be aware of having arrived somewhere.

- Professors should not ignore most members of the class in order to carry on a discussion with a few favored or "highly promising" students.

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UNITY (cont'd from page 2)

of unity by working for harmony; by agreeing never to push too hard, to criticize too sharply, and to go our individual ways when feelings are ruffled, emotions hurt, cherished beliefs disturbed. For the sake of harmony it is simpler to avoid issues, or to be "chantable" and let fester what troubles us. There is little open dissension on this campus, but many of us gather in our cozy corners, blithely writing off other sections of the community. To do more than this would thrust to the surface the fear, the hurt, yes, even the bitterness, or animosity which lurks in the dark. We prize harmony, but we fear unity.

This is, of course, the way of sensible Christians. But it takes courage and faith to be a foolish Christian. For the fool for Christ takes the chance of being exploited by others, to be scorned or laughed at, to be ridiculed. It takes a fool to give up what he cherishes for the sake of others, to give up the noble right to do only what his individual conscience demands--for the sake of others. It takes courage to embark on a new course without first receiving committee action, faculty approval, or consensus. The sensible man waits, is cautious, tries to put his finger on the pulse, and then when he is sure, then he acts. The wise man waits for approval before he gives himself to a cause. It takes a fool to trust others when they are weak, stumbling, or even wrong; to go to chapel for the sake of others though it means little or nothing to you. Sensible men think things over first, weigh the pros and cons, test the evidence. Then they act.

But, says Paul, the power of God does not lie in our good sense, in human wisdom or strength.

Make no mistake about this: if there is anyone among you who fancies himself wise--wise, I mean by the standards of this passing age--he must become a fool to gain true wisdom. For the wisdom of

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PROFESSORS (cont'd from page 2)

- Quizzes should be pointed towards the significant aspects of the lectures and specific assignments, rather than unimportant footnotes and irrelevant material.

- Assignments should be clear and not hastily made.

- Professors should not teach small classes as though they are large ones.

- Sarcasm and dogmatism should not exist in a course in higher education.

- Feuds between and among faculty members should be kept out of the classroom. Peevish remarks about other programs, departments and officials have no place in the classroom and are, to say the least, not professional.

UNITY (cont'd from first col.)

this world is folly in God's sight. Script. says, 'he traps the wise in their own cunning', and 'The Lord knows that the arguments of the wise are futile'.

God's power shows itself in foolishness, in suffering, yes, even in death by execution. We have heard this so often that this language barely pierces our tough hides. Paul says that if we are sensible Christians, we prize our good sense rather than the wisdom of God; and if we are powerful men, we pride our strength, not the strength of God. And this destroys unity, for we look to ourselves and not to God. But we belong to Christ and it is Christ who unites us, not our good sense or power. No doubt the men of power who lead denominations, manage ecumenical organizations and committees, preside over boards and (commissions)--these men have power and great political sense. And surely we do not wish to cast human wisdom to the winds. But just as certainly we know that power wounds as often as it heals, estranges as often as it reconciles, divides as often as it unites. For the path of realism is not always the path of Christ. For the folly of God is wiser than the wisdom of men, and

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UNITY (cont'd from page 3)

God's weakness surpasses our strength.

The path of Christ is the path of lowliness, of suffering, of pain. But it is the path which leads to true unity. True unity is found in God and what God has done for us. It is unity in what we have been made through him, not in what we make ourselves. We are all different--if unity does not hurt, if we do not lose something of ourselves in the process, then we have chosen the way of good sense, not the way of Christ, the way of foolishness. For death is the great folly. Who is the victor if you are so foolish to die for someone else. You do not win, for if you die you are gone. You are the fool. But it is only in dying that we find life, for Christ is the Resurrection and the Life, who lives and rules with the Father and Holy Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.

We are one then because we are in Christ, and "Christ is like a single body with its many limbs and organs. For indeed we were all brought into one body by baptism, in the one Spirit, whether we are Jews of Greeks, whether slaves or free men, and that one Holy Spirit was poured out for all of us to drink."

We are one in Christ. This is a present reality and a future hope. It is both an "is" statement about us now, and an "ought" or statement about what we should be. It takes courage and faith to believe both the "is" and the "ought". For neither seems obvious. The great temptation is to stop believing this, namely that we are one in Christ, and to seek unity on our own terms, on the basis of common background, likes and dislikes, shared beliefs and opinions. This is why we must be fools for Christ, to have courage and faith to believe radically, to trust God rather than men. And only God can create unity--true unity. For God creates unity which is not afraid of differences, which does not hide from reality, which is willing to risk all for the sake of Christ. For true unity is found in Christ, not our denominational tradition or ecclesiastical machinery.

The sign of true unity is always death, for only in death do we really lose ourselves. Something of each one

of us must die. We cannot go our own individual ways, seeking our own little path in life, pursuing the ends we deem important. We must give for the sake of others, but in giving for others we may discover that our own hopes and dreams and ambitions suffer and die. For if unity does not hurt, if we do not lose something of ourselves in the process, then we have chosen the way of good sense, not the way of Christ, the way of foolishness. For death is the great folly. Who is the victor if you are so foolish to die for someone else. You do not win, for if you die you are gone. You are the fool. But it is only in dying that we find life, for Christ is the Resurrection and the Life, who lives and rules with the Father and Holy Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.

Robert L. Wilken