

Table Talk



News and Views of the Student Body of The Lutheran
Theological Seminary at Gettysburg.

Vol. III No. 4

October 11, 1966

RESPONSIBILITY IN A SEMINARY COMMUNITY

Editors Note: This address was given by Dr. Heiges in September 1962. Although it is now four years old, what he has to say is quite appropriate for this year and merits the careful reading of each student.

Let us focus our attention upon the nature of responsibility in a seminary community, in this Seminary community. To this end I shall make several affirmations and comment upon them briefly.

1. In the broadest and deepest sense, the board of directors, the faculty, and the student body are together responsible under God for the well-being of this Seminary community.

Professors sometimes think if it were not for students they could get much more work done; students sometimes think that if it were not for professors their theological education would be a joy; and board members think that if it were not for professors and students the task of maintaining a seminary would be relatively simple!

Seriously, no one segment of our community is more important than the others because if any one segment fails to act responsibly the whole enterprise is endangered. An irresponsible board can weaken or even destroy a seminary; an irresponsible faculty can weaken or even destroy a seminary; an irresponsible student body can weaken or even destroy a seminary.

The board represents officially the stake of the organized church (i.e., the Lutheran Church in America) in this enterprise, but all of us are responsible to the Church, the Body of Christ. From this perspective whether we are board members or faculty members or student body members is of secondary
(Cont'd on page 4)

REFLECTIONS ON MERGER

The editorial which appeared in last week's Table Talk entitled "Toward a Creative Theological Education" is an honest attempt to come to grips with issues which vitally affect us as seminarians. Mr. Pielke's points are well taken--indeed, the urban-university setting offers opportunities for real flexibility, sharpening of goals, and dialogue with contemporary society. But we have heard these arguments for some time now, and I've met with no one who seriously disagrees with them. The problem which faces us is really of a different nature. To call a spade a spade--are these the goals which Mt. Airy envisions in its relocation; are these the goals that are generating the issue of merger between Mt. Airy and Gettysburg?

The first item before us is that of the urban setting. It would seem to me that "urbanity" entails much more than plunking down God's squad in the midst of metropolis. What precisely does the church hope to accomplish in terms of the needs of the people in the city by bringing a seminary among them? In what ways can the university and seminary cooperate to solve the problems of the city? What kind of resources--in terms of time and energy--can the seminarian supply for this task? What can he learn of the needs of the city if the faculty prefers to hole itself up in a university library ruminating on its exclusive possession of the Word? Would not the several millions the church is pouring into this operation be better spent on some effective missions into the urban situation--that is, if the seminary is not taking its urban responsibilities seriously.
(Cont'd on page 5)

TO A FRIEND

Excerpt of a letter from Dietrich Bonhoeffer to a close friend.

The Church is her true self when she exists for humanity. As a fresh start, she should give away all her endowments to the poor and needy. The clergy should live solely on free will offering of their congregations or possibly engage in some secular calling. She must take her part in the social life of the world, not lording it over men, but helping and serving them. She must tell men whatever their calling what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others. And in particular our own church will have to take a strong line with the blasphemies of hybris, power, worship, envy, humbug, for these are the roots of evil. She will have to speak of moderation, purity, confidence, loyalty, steadfastness, patience, discipline, humility, content and modesty. She must not underestimate the importance of human example, which has its origin in the humanity of Jesus, and which is so important in the teaching of St. Paul. It is not abstract argument, but concrete example which gives her word emphasis and power!

Contemporary Note

I wonder if the same things which Bonhoeffer seemed to consider as important then are considered important today? Has the Church finally come of age? Will she, and will we find our "religionless Christianity" by taking on the mantle of the city?

Bonhoeffer's words are indeed reminiscent of the old words of institution to members of the Franciscan Order, and this may encourage some to date the words to periods in the past which have outlived their usefulness.

The question that should be raised from time to time is simply this: if these words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer are considered appropriate for today, can we then say that our major theological (Cont'd next col.)

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CHANCEL PLAYERS

Back in action again this year is that intrepid band known as the Chancel Players. The first official meeting was concerned primarily with the plans for the coming year. The program of events (allowing, of course, for the total unpredictability of this group) was set up as follows: first quarter, a series of readings from "Heavenly Discourses" (slightly blasphemous discourses, at that) to be presented in chapel some fine morning; second quarter, a book-in-hand production in the Aberly Room; third quarter a major production for the seminary community with the possibility of going on the road. The officers this year are: John Woods, president; John Nagle, secretary; Daun McKee, treasurer. Carol Renninger is director again this year. The next scheduled meeting is Monday, October 10th at which time casting will be decided for "Heavenly Discourses." Once again an open invitation is extended to whoever or whatever cares to participate in the fun and frolic.

John Woods

TO A FRIEND (Cont'd)

emphasis should lie in an expanded graduate program during our brief seminary career? Should our major concern be on further degrees, or on learning the use of the basic tools for the vocation of the parish ministry?

To avert the notion that piety should precede learning, it would be helpful to phrase these questions in terms at the proper balance between the "Word" as understood and the "Word" as experienced. The proper balance no doubt is difficult (Cont'd on page 6)

RE-EVALUATION OF THE CHOIR'S FUNCTIONS

Yes, we must agree with Mr. Sabo that the choir is facing a turning point in its ministry. This IS a time of crisis! This is a time which requires a re-evaluation of the choir's function here in our seminary community and in the community at large. We are indebted to Mr. Sabo for bringing the challenge which the choir is facing (and hopefully will continue to face) before the whole seminary community.

It is obvious that the choir and the entire seminary community must define the choir's position in this community in light of our present situation. We cannot fail to recognize the facts as they exist. If, in fact, we were to examine our "Sitz im Leben," we would see that a new understanding of the choir's function is necessary. We must not "retreat." We must move ahead to confront the challenge with a new approach. It is not enough to assume that the roles played by the choir in previous years are sufficient to meet the needs of the seminary and the surrounding vicinity this year. It is not enough to say that unless these roles are played again this year the choir and the entire seminary community will have failed to accept part of our "basic responsibilities."

First, we must examine the present opinions expressed by members of the choir. As Mr. Sabo reports, half of the choir, for various reasons, is not going on the annual tour. Two reasons given are the problem of marriage and that of the comprehensive examinations. There is also a third reason why some do not prefer the tour. It seems to us that the choir's responsibility is to the church here on our campus and in the immediate vicinity. We propose that the choir be realistic in its evaluation of its ministry or function. We think that the tour should be dropped from the schedule. We believe that the choir can assert itself in the seminary community, in Gettysburg and in the surrounding communities. It seems to us (Cont'd on page 6)

LET'S FACE FACTS

In developing creative theological education this seminary (like or not) finds itself a part of a large social institution--the LCA. Through its national conventions and the B.T.E. this institution has said something about theological education.

It has said the "determining factors in the location of the seminaries should include: (1) the presence of a vigorous Lutheran constituency adequate to support financially and intellectually a professional graduate school; (2) a close relationship with a lively community of learning, preferably a university; (3) the availability of ministerial and professional leadership in the community for stimulating new approaches in teaching in varied human situations." In the second place, "the Lutheran Church in America urges the Gettysburg and the Philadelphia seminaries to work toward unification, in a university setting, and directs the Board of Theological Education to deal with these seminaries in a way that will contribute to this end."

In the third place we are confronted with the fact that a sister institution in the same church has taken steps to locate near the University of Pennsylvania. They have options on over half the land. This plan was in the works before the church's recommendations were made.

The Seminary has several options. It can ignore the suggestions of the church and the Board of Theological Education and remain where it is. Or it can ignore the recommendations of the church in regard to unification with Philadelphia in a university setting but take seriously the recommendation of the church to locate in a university-urban setting by striking out on its own and locate in Washington or Pittsburgh. Another option is to remain where it is and attempt to be university oriented by (with a stretching of the imagination) becoming part of Gettysburg University. That would satisfy part of (Cont'd on page 7)

RESPONSIBILITY (Cont'd from page 1)

importance. That we are all members of the Body of Christ is of essential significance, determinative both of our destiny and our responsibility.

2. Although the board, the faculty, and the student body share responsibility for the whole enterprise, there are certain functions which become the special responsibility of each segment of the community.

Let me illustrate. Among the special obligations of the board are relationships with supporting synods and the Lutheran Church in America; the stewardship of endowment, capital, and operating funds; and the election of teaching and administrative personnel. Among the special obligations of the faculty are the development of an increasingly effective curriculum; the maintenance of academic standards; and the application of criteria for admission and graduation. Among the special obligations of the student body are relationships with other seminary student bodies; the development of attitudes and activities to enhance relationships among students on this campus; and the provision of media for the expression of student opinion. (I have been speaking of special obligations of each segment, corporately considered. There are also special obligations of each segment in terms of its individual members, as for example, the responsibilities of effective teaching and assiduous study.)

In addition to these obligations which are peculiar to each segment, there are certain functions which are properly the joint obligation of two or more segments, as for example, the worship of the Seminary community, the orientation of new students, and student-faculty relationships. In still other areas the special obligations of one segment can best be discharged in consultation with another segment. When functions are performed on a joint basis clarity as to who does what is absolutely essential if confusion, suspicion, and even deterioration of good will are to be avoided. (Cont'd next col.)

RESPONSIBILITY (Cont'd from first col.)

3. Responsibility can be validly exercised on various levels, and these levels must be recongized and differentiated.

To illuminate this affirmation I shall describe four basic levels of responsibility.

a. The responsibility of concern. This responsibility rests equally upon every student, every faculty member, and every board member. Furthermore, each student, each professor, each director ought to be concerned about the whole enterprise rather than only a part of it. Specifically, a student can and ought to be concerned not only about his courses and certain extra-curricular activities but also about the curriculum itself and the use of capital funds. Faculty members can and ought to be concerned not only about academic matters but also about refectory food and dormitory living conditions. Not to be concerned about anything beyond the narrow limits of personal interest is reprehensible on the part of any member of the Seminary community.

b. The responsibility of planning. Out of concern ideas grow, but ideas are of little consequence until they are brought together and given shape or form. And this involves the responsibility of developing constructive proposals, that is, of planning. Responsibility on this level can, of course, be delegated to committees, but it can take place spontaneously in any area where concern presses for articulation. Specifically, students can and ought to function on this level not only with reference to Student Association affairs but with reference to any facet of the life of the community. I know from personal experience that a student curriculum committee can develop some excellent proposals with reference to course offerings, an area normally staked off as the exclusive domain of the faculty.

c. The responsibility of decision. Note that every student, every professor, every board member can and should exercise the responsibility of concern and of developing constructive proposals, but (Cont'd on page 5)

RESPONSIBILITY (Cont'd from page 4)

every student, every professor, and every board member cannot participate in every decision. Several students may develop a proposal for a change in the curriculum, but the decision as to whether or not the change is made rests with the faculty. Several professors may develop a proposal for filling a vacancy on the faculty, but the decision as to who will be elected to the position rests with the board. It is essential to the effective functioning of any community that the locus of responsibility of decision in particular areas is carefully defined.

d. The responsibility of execution. When concern eventuates in a proposal and a favorable decision is made in regard to the proposal there remains the responsibility of administering the decision. At this point a vast amount of confusion sometimes exists because of the failure to differentiate between the responsibility of decision and the responsibility of execution. Too many student meetings, faculty meetings, and board meetings become so bogged down with administrative matters that they fail to function intelligently on levels of responsibility proper to such meetings.

To recapitulate: The well-being of this Seminary community depends upon the shared responsibility of the board, the faculty, and the student body. Certain functions, however, become the special obligation of each segment of the whole. Whether with reference to the whole enterprise or to special obligations, responsibility is not of one piece, but can be validly exercised on several levels, including those of concern, of planning, of decision, and of execution.

It is in such context that I appeal to you today for responsible participation in the total life of the Seminary community. Each one of us must, of course, address himself to his particular task--the student to his studies, the teacher to his teaching, the staff (Cont'd next col.)

RESPONSIBILITY (Cont'd from first col.)

member to "housekeeping chores" so that student and teacher may pursue their tasks most effectively. As we carry out our particular tasks, however, let us act responsibly toward the whole community and this includes hard and creative thinking about our life together and about the role of this Seminary in the life of the whole Church. No segment of our community has a monopoly on good ideas. Don't keep good ideas to yourself. Bring them out into the open so that they can be discussed, sharpened, and refined. No area of concern is tabu. Only as ideas are expressed can plans be developed and translated into action and the Seminary move ahead.

And move ahead it WILL, Deo volente. At the heart of our responsible participation in the life of this community is prayer. Let our prayers rise night and day to Him who alone can make this Seminary a blessing to us and to the whole Church. Above all our ideas, our planning, our decisions, and our actions together let these words of the Psalmist be inscribed in bold letters: "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1). May His will be done on this campus, and His Kingdom come.

MERGER (Cont'd from page 1)

The university angle also presents some problems. Its advantages in terms of curriculum and vocational goals are obvious--certainly the church does need men and women with other degrees than a B.D. But the church also has seminaries for a specific functional purpose; if this were not so then we might all just as well head off to Union in New York. Has the call for a move to the university-setting clouded over this fact or perhaps ignored it? Is this new setting going to enable us to retain the goals of a denominational seminary which seeks to train ordained clergy as well as fulfill its educational function in the church? Unless we seriously consider what we are (Cont'd on page 6)

MERGER (Cont'd from page 5)

in relation to the strictly (or almost so) academic theological institutions now in existence, there is a good chance that we could forfeit our "raison d'etre" in favor of being a second-rate Union. This brings to the fore as well the question which Kansas City managed to skirt so deftly (see the recent issue of Una Sancta) and which even gets evasive answers around here-- just what is the contemporary Lutheran concept of the ministry?

But relations to a university must be reciprocal as well. Here again I question the rush-of-the-mad-bull approach taken by Mt. Airy. It seems the University of Pennsylvania is not exactly pulsating with joy over the arrival of the Word. Where is dialogue to take place? How is it going to take place and what plans have been laid? Is the seminarian to take to the quad button-holing every likely looking atheist who comes by and to demand that the kerygma be challenged for the good of his academic and spiritual development? Unless there are some really solid working relationships (such as have been established at Chicago) the whole enterprise isn't worth a tinker's damn.

"Taking theological education seriously presupposes taking our contemporary world seriously, and this makes an urban-university context necessary." To this one can only add Amen. But I wonder just how seriously the move at Mt. Airy is being taken. Is it to satisfy some rather ephemeral whims? Or is it a real attempt to latch onto the meaning of our times and the needs of the church and the clergy who will have to grapple with that world? To be frank, I doubt whether the latter is the present case for the course of events in Eastern Pennsylvania.

John Woods

TO A FRIEND (Cont'd from page 2)

to achieve or even agree upon. Nevertheless, an over-emphasis on the one without sufficient background in the other might promote early failures in the parish life of the fresh seminarian.

Having something real to give to a community entails both the ability to communicate and something experienced to communicate.

Let us speak the truth with one another in love.--Saint Paul.

C. Pohlhaus

CHOIR (Cont'd from page 3)

that there is so much for the choir to do in these areas that there would not be time or reason for a tour, as it is commonly conceived of here at the seminary.

We propose that the choir do more in chapel than sing the introit and graduals each Friday. Anthems could be sung at least once or twice a month. The choir could introduce the seminary community to various liturgical possibilities for the Friday eucharists and for the daily matins services. A partial list of these alternatives has been given to Mr. Clippinger and the choir officers. It is their responsibility to investigate all of these options and the means by which they could be utilized for the benefit of the seminary community.

Mr. Sabo says that there are "those who insist that Gettysburg Seminary exists in a monastic shell." Who are these people and where do they live? I am sure that this opinion comes from this immediate area of Pennsylvania and Maryland and, particularly, from Gettysburg itself. Is it not possible that the choir could sing for the college and the town's people? Would it not be accepting our responsibility if the choir were to sponsor special programs for the 'Old Folks' Home, the local jail and (Cont'd on page 7)

CHOIR (Cont'd from page 6)

the local children's home? A list of suggestions in this area of the choir's ministry also has been given to the officers and Mr. Clippinger. Included in this list are various ways the choir could serve the entire region. There is much to do right here, more than any choir at this seminary ever realized. It is the responsibility of the choir this year to recognize the challenges for an effective, realistic ministry.

Certainly, the Christian ministry "is filled with basic responsibilities" and we must be quick to accept all of them--all that are possible for us to carry out effectively. There is so much for us to do here that I doubt that the choir will be as effective if it carries out its intentions for a tour. Would it not be logical for the choir to focus its abilities here and not in the mid-west. We must not "retreat" to old, outmoded ways of satisfying the needs of a few people. Instead, we must redefine the ministerial functions of the choir in terms of a realistic appraisal of our "Sitz im Leben."

Tom Myers.

LET'S FACE FACTS (Cont'd)

the requirement. In twenty years Adams County will be completely urban so that requirement will be satisfied. But it still would be disregarding the recommendation to continue merger talks with Philadelphia.

However, if the seminary discovers that it is part of the church and that means taking seriously the three points which are unquestionably part of the picture, the question is not whether we should merge or not but in what form shall the merger occur. President Heiges mentioned five types. Another possibility would be to merge in phases over a ten to twenty year span.

The question arose as to whether a merged school would be a pale carbon
(Cont'd next col.)

LET'S FACE FACTS(Cont'd from col. 1)

copy of Chicago. (Let's face it. The University of Pennsylvania is not in the same league as the University of Chicago). The answer Dr. Heiges gave to the question was no, it will not be a pale copy. Apparently this speculation is based on the projected intern centers. However if this intern program is a success, nothing will prevent Chicago from duplicating and surpassing us in this field and we will still be left with a problem--the University of Pennsylvania. The problem then is to form a school whose reputation will not depend upon the University of Pennsylvania, but rest upon its own merit. It is to this problem which the energies and imaginations of faculty, Board of Directors and students should be applied.

M. Brendle

WHAT'S WITH WOTS

The last WOTS meeting was held at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Heiges. Following a short business meeting, Dr. Heiges gave a talk entitled "The Seminary and You." He discussed several problems concerned with seminaries in general--"What degree should be offered?" and "Is a seminary a professional or a graduate school, or perhaps, a combination of both?" Also the well-known local problem was mentioned--the matter of merger.

In the "You" portion of his talk, Dr. Heiges stressed the need for community spirit. And speaking of community, it seems as though the female segment of the Seminary was not originally bargained for--the founders thought the present location would be excellent to discourage any female intrusion. Dr. Heiges recommended two books for all wives to read--How to Become a Bishop Without Being Religious and Bachelor of Divinity. Our thanks to Dr. and Mrs. Heiges for a very enjoyable and informative evening--that desert was delicious!

Hope to see you all at WOTS on Wednesday when the faculty wives will present a musical program.

PICTURES FROM OVERSEAS

To share with the seminary community some things seen and felt during the sabbatical year, I will expose to public view a picture each week on the bulletin board occupying the wall east of ad building room 203 (if you think of persons rather than numbers, this is the duplex where Dean Stroup is chairman and Jeanne Nunamaker is secretary). Comments will be made in Table Talk rather than as marginalia on the exhibit.

The initial picture shows a display on the front of a large Roman Catholic church in downtown Vienna. This is one of many notices posted on the spacious space provided there. It carries a sentiment promoted in recent times in Protestant circles in the States one logical step farther. A translation appears with the picture, which might be titled "Ecumenism in Vienna."

Dr. Howard N. Bream