

GUEST EDITORIAL

Christian Education and Theology: A Dialogue

by *Dennis L. Wayman*

It is said that after being told by an ecstatic young man that finally through the miracle of the telegraph Boston could speak to Texas, Henry David Thoreau asked the perceptive question, "What does Boston have to say to Texas?" This same type of question is initiating significant dialogue in the Christian community, "What does Christian Education have to say to Theology?"

Christian Education in its responsible use of research and of theories of the social sciences does have much to say, and is finding increasingly stronger vocal cords with which to speak. Based on disciplined observation of God's created order, Christian educators are converging on the developmental views and are making significant contributions to the Christian community. These educators in making statements about man and his growth are captivating the attention of those who do theology. This dialogue regarding man to be a pivotal point of systematic theological thought affects every area of Christian thought.

To provide an arena for this essential dialogue, Donald M. Joy, Associate Professor of Christian Education at Asbury Theological Seminary, and Ted Ward, Professor of Curriculum Research at Michigan State University, co-host an annual "Conference on Human Development and Christian Education." Taking place on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary, the three day conference after its second year is gaining in importance and in participation.

The largest participation is by those who are in preparation for and presently involved in parish ministry. These include students, Christian education directors, chaplains, and pastors. Those concerned for

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denominational curriculum development comprise another large group representing: the Church of God – Anderson, the Church of the Nazarene, Evangelical Friends Alliance, the Free Methodist Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Wesleyan Church.

Another large group are representatives of Christian liberal arts colleges, especially student development officers and staff from: Berea, Covenant, Greenville, Malone, Spring Arbor, Sterling, Wheaton, and Taylor University.

Professors and researchers in graduate education also comprise a large group representing: Dallas Theological Seminary, the Episcopal Seminary of Lexington, Gordon Divinity School, Lexington Theological Seminary, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wheaton Graduate School, Michigan State University, and the University of Kentucky.

The conference format is one of input and discussion practicums. Three of the speakers have articles in this issue which are representative of the concerns expressed in addresses to the conference. They are Donald M. Joy, Catherine Stonehouse, and Mildred Bangs Wynkoop.

Ted Ward, Professor of Curriculum Research and Director of the Values Development Education program at Michigan State University, is a prominent figure in the evangelical world, largely known for his part in developing the overseas movement known as Theological Education by Extension. The concluding address, "Human Development in the Light of Scripture, Christian Experience, and Scientific Inquiry," by Dr. Ward will long stand as a milestone statement in the dialogue.

Peter Mullen, a Jesuit priest, has served as staff psychologist at the Center for Human Development, University of Notre Dame. It was from this experience in the continuing education for priests that Peter Mullen made many practical applications of the research.

Glenn Taylor, Dean of Students at Ontario Bible College, brought from his training in counseling the address, "The Christian Campus as a Therapeutic Community." Dr. Taylor explained vividly the relationship of the total environment to healthy human development, thus providing an important correlative statement in the dialogue.

As plans are being made for next year's conference, the effects of the one just completed are still being evaluated. The continuing dialogue will be both interesting and imperative for the Christian community.