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the opinion



 Vol. V, No. 6

 March, 1966

COME ALL YE THAT LABOR

by C. Paul Roberts

The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations, known to the public as the AFL-CIO, celebrated ten years of marital bliss with a bang-up, marvelous Convention in romantic San Francisco. A significant feature of the Convention was the attendance of over 100 theological students. These future men of "the cloth" were invited to come and observe the internal machinations of America's most powerful labor force. The experience was not forgettable!

The scholastics received the invitation from the California Religion and Labor Council to participate in a special Seminary Conference sponsored by the AFL-CIO. Jews, Roman Catholics, and regular catholics (including eight fundy brethren, but only one from Fuller!) from fourteen theological schools met together for this ecumenical labor jamboree. It was red-carpet all the way. Breakfast and lunch at the modern Del Webb Townhouse, special seating at the AFL-CIO Convention, private interviews with national and international labor leaders, sessions with the top AFL-CIO brass! The conference was jammed into a day and a half of exciting non-stop activity. Unfortunately, transportation arrangements, lack of publicity at the Seminary, and Fall quarter examinations prevented a more Fuller attendance. Perhaps I can do the next best thing--recapture at least four impressions from that kaleidescopic week-end.

Firstly, I was surprised at the genuine kindness and hospitality proffered to the delegates. (Was this due to the fact that labor's antipathetic attitude toward automation has preserved a certain awareness of people as persons?) At any rate, every effort was made to accomodate us and permit us to take full advantage of the Convention. For example, the coordinator of the Seminary Conference heard that several Fuller men were unable to attend. So, he volunteered to pay for their plane fare up and meet any other expenses.

Secondly, I was surprised to find that of the 4,000 labor officials assembled for the Convention, less than 4% wore dark-blue striped suits, chomped on long green cigars, supported a rotund beer

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EDITORIAL

WHY WRITE FOR THE OPINION?

This question, hopefully, has been asked by most of you, and undoubtedly there have been many differing responses. Judging from past response to the opinion, some have considered it valuable to their educational growth and important to the over-all communication of ideas throughout the seminary. Others, quite obviously, have only given it a patronizing smile, if that. If this journal offers anything of merit to the Seminary community, we should consider what it might be; and having come to some conclusion, act with appropriate seriousness.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE VALUES OF THE OPINION?

The following discussion is intended to stimulate your own thinking in this matter. These points are by no means original. Nor are they meant to be all-inclusive.

1. the opinion can be a valuable source of communication within the Seminary community. To the degree that Fuller represents a faculty and student body of divergent backgrounds--educationally and theologically--there is a necessity to have a common meeting place for discussion: a forum, if you please. The continuing need for conversation in theology is well recognized, but important, too, is the need at Fuller for adequate conversation in the humanities, especially in literature, art, and music. the opinion can help to promote and encourage much needed discussion on ideas which arise, or should arise, in the course of our studies.
2. the opinion can be a channel for creativity. It is not necessary to labor the point of the value of developing originality in our thinking. Creative writing, such as fictional prose and poetry, should be encouraged at Fuller. (Perhaps even our theology may become more poetic. . . though not necessarily more fictional).
3. Finally, the opinion can be a means by which we challenge our intellectual laziness and conformity. The stereotype, whenever it becomes an impetus for stagnation, must be challenged. There is a sense in which we must strive for a state of intellectual unrest. We must not fear to be out of equilibrium, lest we too easily rest in the stability of complacency. In this sense, the opinion can be a goad to our slothful thinking.

SO WHAT?

We have talked about the opinion as if it were a "thing", for us or against us. In reality it is merely what we make it. We choose to write for it, or we choose to ignore it. In light of the above mentioned benefits we, the new editorial staff, hope you will take advantage of this journal. //

the editors

COME ALL YE THAT LABOR (continued)

belly, and squinted through beady eyes framed above a Jewish nose. Neither did I see many Negroes. I did notice a considerable representation of younger men--a fact which might indicate that old-time unionism may have reached its apex.

Thirdly, an unmistakable sense of bewildered frustration and fear permeated the events at the Convention. It was fear engendered by the spectre of automation. Few public statements on the issue were expressed, yet talks with individuals revealed a certain perplexed unrest at the distinct possibility of a mechanized automated society. Naturally, practical problems such as the administration and organization of internal problems, the incorporation of white collar workers to union ranks, etc., occupied most of their time and energy. Nevertheless, I felt that automation has unionism uneasily on the defensive.

Fourthly, the majority of the seminarians returned highly impressed with the quality of several of the top leaders, especially Walter Reuther. These men are very articulate, aware of the subtle complexities in the issues involved, and extremely candid with regard to unionism's weaknesses while at the same time confident of its over-riding strengths. The ease and poise with which these leaders handled the tremendous power available to them fascinated all of us. Their unassuming familiarity with the President (at whom many jibes were directed) also tickled our sensibilities, although most of us covered up and made sure others would see we could experientially empathize with this power and familiarity.

The main event, of course, was the Convention. Like show biz, however, it also had its sideshows. We heard Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey smile his way through an hour of labor-rousing platitudes. We listened to Secretary of State Willard Wirtz outline some pro-labor Administration proposals upon which Congress would act. We gave special heed to Secretary of State Dean Rusk since he spent over an hour on the Vietnam issue. Despite personal reservations about his apologetic, it was a privilege to observe Dean Rusk's comportment throughout his demonstration-riddled speech which was picketed by Berkeley and San Francisco State students. These Vietnam Day Committee members (VDC) had managed to infiltrate the Convention hall galleries and, in a very quiet and orderly fashion, protested U.S. government policies with colorful, neat signs and banners. Although Secretary of State Rusk respected their dissenting opinion, at the close of the speech, AFL-CIO President George Meany (perhaps from an overdose of patriotism) ordered "those kooks" out of the auditorium. This action brought loud cheers from the Convention floor delegates. It also brought the press and TV cameras running. Thus, we witnessed an ironic twist--labor decrying the very methods it has so expertly used to obtain its own objectives.

These were the highlights of the Convention. The coordinator of the Seminary Conference considered that particular aspect of the Convention such a success, and we chorused in with the desire for another, that tentative plans were drawn for a similar program this Spring. This time the Southland, I think Long Beach, will host the annual convention of the United Auto Workers. Perhaps the "neo-evangelical" Social Concerns Committee can undertake the responsibility of proper representation by Fuller seminarians at the next conference.

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REVELATION AND RELEVANCE
by George Crofts

A report on the Presbyterian "Proposed Confession of 1967".

"You may think us visionary, but we have in mind the possibility that Presbyterians in the coming year may discuss theology." These are the words of the Chairman of the Special Committee on a Brief Contemporary Statement of Faith to the commissioners at the General Assembly in Columbus Ohio this past year. They were prophetic words, for no sooner was the Proposed Confession of 1967 made public than a storm of controversy arose. From many quarters came angry protests, even threats of schism. "It is just watering the whole thing down!" declared a Denver minister in comparing the new Confession with the older Westminster Confession of Faith. Less vociferous, but of imposing number were they who favored the Proposed Confession, at least with modifications. Now in the hands of a special committee which is considering objections and changes, an amended version will be put before the next General Assembly this year.

The Proposed Confession of 1967 is the result of widespread feeling that the Westminster Confession is obsolescent and that the church needs a standard directed specifically to our mid-twentieth century civilization. This document, its framers insist, is not intended to be a complete statement of the Reformed position; rather it is a roof, a timely covering supported by the sturdy walls of our confessional heritage, including the Westminster Confession, Helvetic Confessions, Nicene Creed, etc. It is a way, says Prof. A. E. Dowey of Princeton, its chief proponent, "to express the contemporary relevance of old truth." What is most relevant, to men today, its framers believe, is reconciliation. Reconciliation is the warp and woof of the Proposed Confession which deals in turn with God's work of reconciliation, the church's ministry of reconciliation, and the fulfillment of reconciliation in glory.

Opponents of the Confession attack it in two general areas; firstly, on its theology, and, secondly, regarding certain matters of practice. In the sphere of practice the statement encouraging interracial marriage is criticized as being too strong; also, it is urged that personal morality be emphasized. More fundamental are the objections of a theological nature. A theological critique of the Confession was drawn up by a number of ministers meeting in Chicago in November, and published in a booklet entitled "A conversation about 'The Proposed Confession of 1967'." Suggested changes include a stronger statement on reconciliation and the deity of Christ, and strengthening the required subscription of ministerial candidates to the older confessions and Scripture. It also asks for the inclusion of a statement of the inspiration of the Bible.

Is it not strange that a document which avowedly takes reconciliation as its main plank should be accused of stating this very

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REVELATION AND RELEVANCY (continued)

doctrine too weakly? The answer is that while the functions of the three Persons of the Trinity in reconciliation are spelled out the role of man is not. Man is treated in a corporate fashion which to some zealous critics smacks of universalism. More important, however, is the charge that the exposition of repentance and faith is weak and not properly emphasized. As for the charge that Christ's deity is not developed at sufficient length, it is answered that this is done in the Nicene Creed adequately and therefore need not be repeated in the Proposed Confession.

The one place where the Proposed Confession of 1967 admittedly diverges from the Westminster Confession is on the doctrine of inspiration. Inspiration is not affirmed, it is not denied; it is simply ignored. In its place is the declaration that the Bible bears witness to Christ who is God's revelation. This is a shift from inspiration to revelation, says Professor Dowey, and corrects an error in emphasis in the Westminster Confession. The mistake occurred because the Westminster Divines tried to counter the claim of the Roman Catholics to an infallible Church with that of an infallible Bible. The contemporary position is a return to the center. The question of inspiration is left up to the individual to ponder, and so the authority of the Bible as Scripture rests solely on the fact that it has been received and recognized as such by the church. (Pt. I, Sec. III, B) But if history shows anything it shows that the ecclesia visibilis is subject to error, including mistakes in her pronouncements on the canon itself as is exemplified by the conflicting opinions about the place of the Apocrypha in the canon. Consequently, while stating that Scripture is normative or authoritative the Confession gives no real basis for accepting the Bible as normative other than its statement that it is. Is the Confession itself inspired? At this point the Proposed Confession falls into one of the dilemmas that beset the neoorthodox position, it proclaims that one can have a certain knowledge of Jesus Christ without possessing a certain record of or message concerning him. The Christ which is offered to us by this Confession, then, is a slightly indistinct Christ; it is a Christ who perfectly reconciled the world to himself, but may or may not have inspired a perfectly trustworthy record of his work.

Having spoken of the weaknesses it behoves me to briefly enumerate the strengths of the Proposed Confession. First, it is simple and readable. Few theological jawbreakers are used, and every effort has been made to employ the actual expressions of the Bible in doctrinal matters. It is unified, having been built around one key doctrine; it is short and relevant to the problems of our time, such as discrimination. Finally, in places it is eloquent. Consider this for expressiveness:

God has created the world of space and time to be the sphere of his dealings with men. In its beauty and vastness, sublimity and awfulness, order and disorder the world reflects to the eye of faith the majesty and mystery of its Creator.
I, II.

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REVELATION AND RELEVANCY (continued)

Will the Proposed Confession of 1967 be accepted? Its passage, at least in a modified form, seems almost certain. If it does become a standard of the Presbyterian Church may it be used by God to remind men of the relevance of the Christian message to us, and to inspire them to serve Jesus Christ. //

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THE TRANSCENDENT GOD AND CHRISTIAN SUFFERING
by Leoncio Yao

Christian life in this earthly existence is a life of suffering. No Christian can be exempted from this. For to be a Christian means first of all to be in the awareness of this moment before God, coram Deo. And this is tremendously painful, for this makes a person realize his finiteness, his sinfulness, and his unbelief. This means inward suffering. This involves humbling of himself and admitting that he is prone to do evil and to disobey Him, that he does not love Him and His neighbor as he loves himself, that he often indulges himself in acquisition of his own glory, fame and pleasure. Therefore, he is guilty; he needs forgiveness. Moreover, this confrontation with Him means facing His demands in life. And this too is extremely painful to him, for he feels that his horizontal dimension of life does not level up to the vertical dimension. And the more sensitive he is to this great "gap", the more he suffers. It is indeed difficult to accept the "infinite qualitative distinction" between God and man. For the acknowledgement of this reality in human existence produces endless sufferings. And thus the closer an individual lives with God, the more sufferings he will experience in this life.

Knowing oneself in relation to the transcendent God, the Christian then must deny himself. In denying himself, he must not try to find himself in the security of his earthly personal attachment which he makes with his immediate associates, family or possessions. He is not to depend upon them as the "objects" of his likes and dislikes. Instead he is to deny any traces of his self-identification and trust in them. But to be detached from this worldly tangible uncertain certainty is strenuous. To perform this task of dying away from immediacy is rigorous. For he is so closely related to the temporal and materialistic things in life. By natural disposition, he has glued himself with the artificial values of this earthly existence, so that to break away from them means suffering. It demands his unconditional denouncement of all these false absolutes. It requires his unrebelling submission to the mercy and providence of God. It calls for his trust and commitment to his Lord. And his obedience to Him implies his sufferings.

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THE TRANSCENDENT GOD AND CHRISTIAN SUFFERING (continued)

There is a persistent nature in Christian suffering. Precisely it is because there is no final battle to be fought in this life of relating absolutely to the absolute God here and now. Hour by hour, moment by moment he is to confess that he can do nothing in and of himself before God. But this is not easy to do. For it is against his nature to admit that God helps those who cannot help themselves, including himself. To let God be God and man, man involves suffering. And the moment he thinks he has acknowledged and confessed his helplessness, the moment he thinks he has finally separated himself from this worldly security and has fully depended upon Him, he falls back into spiritual pride and thus relapses into his old nature once again. So this life is an endless suffering.

Added to the inward suffering of the Christian is that which is inflicted from without. Biblical realism speaks of the persecutions of the anti-Christ, the non-believers of this world. The Christian, as soon as he has marked his identification with Christ, his being in the world and not of the world, becomes separated from those others who are of the world. And this again is a break which brings excruciating pain of isolation and rejection. And the more he witnesses, the more he exposes himself to this constant break. Yet he cannot do otherwise. Then suffer he must.

Secondly, Biblical realism talks of bearing the burdens of the lives of fellow-believers in the community. The Christian is to share with the hardships, trials, misdeeds and misgivings of other Christians. He is to understand them and forgive their trespasses as they do to him. He is to put up with their human creaturely limitations and expect no more than what they are. Yet often he does not and cannot carry himself into the sphere of their lives and sufferings. And he suffers from a little taste of sympathy for them, but more from his own inconsistency and unability to be with them.

Thirdly, Biblical realism proclaims the mystery of the agonies of the whole humanity in sicknesses, deaths, calamities, wars and disruptions. The Christian is to endure the presence of afflictions and misfortunes in this world. He is disturbed and restrained by the impressions of human poverty and natural disasters. He is grieved by the carelessness and obscurity of mankind. He is threatened by their vicious innovations of conflicts and mutual extermination. Above all, he is lost at the human cries for a little love and concern. And he wishes that the turmoils and tribulations of this world will pass. But before this wish ventures out from his thought, already he gets the repercussions of gloom and despair. Thus, in distress he remains in this lot of suffering humanity.

However, true Christian suffering allows no time for self-pity, doubt and resentment. For the Christian is advised not to indulge in mere introspection and pessimistic investigation. He is to look beyond himself and to behold in awe this transcendent God who invites him to listen for what He has to say to him in his sufferings. He tells him in His revelation, the written Word, that He is the One who has created him and the world. He instructs him that He is not a distant spectator of human sufferings, that He does not take pleasure

THE TRANSCENDENT GOD AND CHRISTIAN SUFFERING (continued)
to see humanity in pain, that He is present in and with them. He opens to him the truth of His Being, in Jesus Christ He has revealed His compassion for them and He has suffered with and for them. And by the resurrection of His Son, He has triumphed over all their human limitations in weaknesses, sorrows, sins and death, and thus He has given them life of eternal blessedness and peace, He has promised them the hope of the final Day of their human struggles. Therefore, the Christian must not fix his sight at his present human predicament. Instead he is to look to Jesus Christ and receive from Him the joy and comfort of His love, the promise and consolation of His Word, knowing that the sufferings he bears are just like one little dot in the infinite volumes of His sufferings for him and the world. And at the outburst of gratitude he is to praise His divine sovereignty which allows him to suffer for a time so that in humility and hope he will be mindful of His promised Word to all His children in this earth who like the Apostle will say,

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we are saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Amen.

(Romans 8:18-25)

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IS WRIGHT RIGHT?

While we may be grateful to Dr. Wright for some instructive psychological insights in his article on "The Death of God," it should be noted that he makes many direct and indirect theological observations which are more misleading than helpful.

One might indeed wonder whether he ever comes to grips with the "God is dead" theology at all. Could not guidance be sought here from the proper source, the department of Systematic Theology?

Even apart from this larger issue, however, there are many individual matters which surely cannot be allowed to pass.

1. Thus nothing could be less true theologically than to say that "it is a question of how true our mythologies are."

2. A statement like "God allowed his people to discover" is so obviously inadequate that one would hardly expect it from a properly

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A POEM

Living, muck-mired by necessity,
twisting,
churning,
sinking.

"Here, take my hand."
But it won't quite reach and
he won't be dirtied
helping me.

He goes now,
not for help,
but reproaching,
"I know your problem!"

Playing God I dug this hole,
real deep
till the walls caved in.
Then it rained.

Living, muck-mired by necessity,
twisting,
churning,
sinking.

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IS WRIGHT RIGHT? (continued)
taught catechumen.

3. The equation of God's allowing religious forms (presumably outdated) to be destroyed, his prophets to be slain, and his Son crucified, is utterly confused.

4. Failure to see that biblical "symbols" are not just ours, but are divinely given, produces a fine crop of false and destructive conclusions.

5. This rests on the more serious failure to see that these "symbols" are not temporarily helpful analogies, but correspond to the reality of God (God the original, man the imago, not vice versa).

6. This in turn rests on the even more serious and ultimate failure to work out the fact that the reality with which we deal is God, his world, ourselves within it, not ourselves, our faith, our experiences, our demands and needs, and God within these.

The last point reminds us that, since psychology is by nature the study of man, there is all the greater reason for the psychologist to guard against an anthropologising of theology. When he does not, the result is inevitable a Schleiermacherian Liberalism which bears only a superficial resemblance to true theology, but which seems to find only too evident reflection in Dr. Wright's article.

Sincerely yours,
Dr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley

THE NEW MORALITY

Onward Christian Soldiers! but to what, victory or defeat?

In this day and age is the Church truly prepared to meet the enemy on his own ground with a dynamic, scientific, logical and telling artillery of facts, or are we trying to win the battle for souls with horse and buggy techniques?

Take the round table forum or debate of the other evening on 'The New Morality': How did our Christian moral precepts fare in that instance compared to the precepts of the 'New Immorality' as presented by a cool, calculating, intellectual using up to date tools of psychological technique, coupled with a certain logic and presented with systematic order. No holds were barred, he even used ridicule--"Take those blinkers off and stop being provincial." Here he tried to reach us through our inherent egotistical pride.

"All is fair in love and war," they say--well, this is war! Let's not lose the battle by default, through complacency nor lack of zeal. Surely Christians are not behind in native intelligence, nor the use of logic--yet not a single telling argument was offered in rebuttal the other evening. An outsider would have thought that we probably tacitly agreed with the opponent.

Now let's get down to cases. Yes, it is possible to be moral without acknowledging one's self to be Christian, but all immorality is outside of true Christianity.

Immorality is not limited to the field of sex. The call of the flesh for creaturely comforts and excessive soft living often induces temptations toward the use of unethical practises to secure them.

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THE NEW MORALITY (continued)

There is also the added desire for prestige among our constituents which is forthcoming when we attain material wealth. But the indulgence in--I want what I want when I want it--a wholly self centered view of life is never rewarded with true happiness nor total security.

Moreover man has never advanced civilization by any form of immorality. He only shows up his own weakness. We do not get bulging biceps without exercise, no more do we become strong psychologically, mentally nor emotionally without exercise, the exercise of self discipline.

It is not surprising that the focal point of the other evening became sex; for it is not allowed to remain outside our thoughts for any length of time. Our whole culture has become permeated with it. Movies, plays, television, radio entertainment, books, in fact the greater bulk of entertainment media is permeated with sex overtones. Magazines run long articles on birth control pills, campus surveys of the opinions regarding premarital sex among students, etc. Sex used to be a private affair, but now it is a subject for mealtime conversation. Our modesty is slowly being eroded away. Subtly we are being led step by step. This is a healthy attitude--it is not good for our mental health to have inhibitions, extra marital sex releases the tension from marriage, ad nauseum. This is not a practical trend, even from the point of world governments, for corruption and moral decay always precede the toppling of empires.

What place does sex have in nature's economy? We all know that the continuation of the life of the various species depends upon it. Sex is not a toy, though nature has made it attractive in order to fulfill her purposes. Man is the only animal that perverts sex. It is true that occasionally a male animal will have sex play towards another male, but he is always rebuffed, he never gets any cooperation.

However, our opponent the other evening approved of human homosexuality, claiming that it is perfectly moral if practiced by adults. If it is truly moral, why was he squeamish about the idea of propositioning minors to this practice, or doesn't he realize that the human male long before his majority, most assuredly reaches full sexual awareness and capacity, perhaps both to the highest peak of his lifetime? If homosexuality is wholly moral, why deny this avenue for the release of a minor's biological urges? Where was our opponent's logic here? It would have been more logical to the trend of his presentation to recommend it to minors, who he said were not emotionally ready nor financially able to assume the responsibility of marriage; for here he could find a perfect security from unwanted pregnancies.

If sexual abstinence were unhealthful, or caused undue emotional strain, the priesthood of the Roman Catholic church should be a very sickly lot, as adhering to celibacy is part of their vows for ordination.

Irresponsible sexual freedom is not a way that holds promise for emotional security, lack of frustration, nor for true happiness. If these things could be obtained by sexual promiscuity or license, surely the suicide rate would have dropped in Sweden after they

THE NEW MORALITY (continued)

lowered the standards of sexual behaviour. However Sweden has one of the highest suicide rates in the world.

Logic can play a major role, when presenting practical reasons for adhering to Christian precepts: these aside from the great joy found in a personal experience of God when we decide to follow His way.

Let's never waiver as the opponent tries to brainwash us with his high sounding but hollow verbal gymnastics; rather let us gather our ammunition and zero in on all his efforts to recruite converts to his ideology. //

L. McCleary
Lay Student

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the opinion is published the first Wednesday of each month throughout the school year by students at Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 North Oakland Avenue, Pasadena, California. the opinion welcomes a variety of opinions consistent with general academic standards. Therefore, opinions expressed in articles and letters are those of the authors and are not to be construed as the view of the Seminary, faculty, student council, or editors of the opinion.

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