

January 20, 1978

President D. E. Weiss
The Seminary

Dear Dan:

Having completed my inquiry into the matter about which we were concerned, I am writing to report my conclusions. Attached are copies of two letters written to Dr. McDaniel, one summarizing our first discussion and another which was followed by two lengthy conversations. After a fairly thorough exploration of the issues, I am convinced that the basic problem is one of semantics and poor communication. I do not believe that Tom's doctrinal views are at variance with our Doctrinal Basis.

The taped lecture contained statements which seemed to reflect an Arian Christology, but he does not intend the implications of his interpretation to be those of Arianism. Arians insisted that the pre-existent Christ was a created being, therefore finite, and not really divine. The primary concern of the Nicene opponents was to affirm the full deity of Jesus Christ. Tom identifies with the Nicene party and rejects the assumptions and conclusions of the Arians. He does not hesitate to make an affirmation of the deity of Christ, accepting Jesus Christ as fully God and fully man, and believing that the full New Testament disclosure reveals a Trinitarian understanding of God.

When confronted with the questions raised by statements in the Green Lake lectures, he manifested no arrogant spirit or dogmatic defence of his views. Neither did he try to avoid facing the issues or give devious answers to protect his job. His main reaction was one of surprise and hurt. Having felt elated by the response to his lectures, he believed that he had done something which would redound to the credit of Eastern. Instead, he found that he had been misunderstood and suspected of doctrinal deviation. He stated that he did not like to contemplate a future in which he would constantly feel himself the object of suspicion and the cause of conflicts which would produce emotional stress. He would like to work in a setting where there will be understanding and support. Criticism of his ideas would be welcome from colleagues interested in serious dialogue and exploration of the Scriptures, but suspicion and criticism which is behind his back is disturbing.

I believe that Tom has been so diligently pursuing biblical studies that he has not taken time to familiarize himself with areas of historical and systematic theology related to the biblical investigations. Whether one can


develop a purely biblical theology, without taking account of the inferences and judgments drawn by responsible bodies of Christians and issuing in creeds and confessions of faith, I do not know. In theory, one should be able to do so, but there is an accumulated body of doctrine which has come to be accepted as orthodoxy, and while it is presumably based upon the Scriptures, it often goes beyond the language of the Bible. I doubt that one can isolate biblical theology entirely from these systematic formulations. On the other hand, one can hardly fault a scholar for neglecting to give attention to other areas of study, when it requires such an investment of time to learn to think in the language and thought-forms of the Bible itself. Tom takes very seriously his vocation to understand and teach the message of the inspired Scriptures.

Not only was there insufficient awareness of the prolonged battles in the early centuries, when proof-texts were met with other proof-texts, charges with counter-charges, theological implications with contrary implications, but Tom was speaking in a semi-formal setting without a manuscript or notes. Having become aware of the many landmines planted in this terrain, he needs to take more pains to elaborate statements of the kind which he made, so that people cannot easily attribute to his words interpretations and implications which are unintended. Whether in popular lectures or in the classroom, it would help to make clear his affirmations on fundamental issues, so that misunderstandings do not lead to whispering campaigns by students or others. The subject of Christology is exceedingly complex, but also crucially important. Neither the Creed of Nicaea, nor the Chalcedonian Formula, offered a rational explanation or definition of the divinity of Christ or of the way in which "two natures" could inhere in one person. They could only make certain affirmations and negations which served as protective devices. That which they intended to protect is something about which Tom McDaniel seems to be clearly affirmative.

As will be apparent to you, I have shifted ground considerably since the initial reaction to the taped lectures. I have probed as thoroughly as I know how to do, and the result is that I believe our apprehensions to have been unfounded. There were statements which made an inquiry incumbent upon us, because it would be easy to infer from them that the speaker had tendencies toward one form of anti-Trinitarianism. Since this examination has not led to substantiation of our concerns, I consider Dr. McDaniel's views compatible with the seminary's doctrinal statement.

You should have some sort of statement from Tom when you return, and he will be glad to talk with you at your earliest convenience. The final decision rests with you and the Board, of course, but at this point I could not lend my support to any pressure to urge Tom to make a move. While a university setting might afford an atmosphere in which freedom to explore and to broach new interpretations would exist, Tom's pastoral interest and desire to devote his scholarship to the service of Christ and the Church should fit him for a seminary setting. There is always the problem that people do not always welcome new insights, and in a consciously conservative context, resistance to the unaccustomed word and idea is enhanced. I believe that he has "the root of the matter" in him, however, and that we could become a supportive community which would encourage him to make his contributions. Tensions are not likely to disappear, but will emerge from time to time among students and constituents, and he, you, and the Board have to decide whether all concerned can live with them in a spirit of mutual trust and understanding and support.

Cordially,



Norman H. Maring

Dean of the Faculty

cc: Dr. McDaniel