Russia Feels Intense Need For Redemption, Cleric Says

By RICHARD BEST

Two great problems of Christianity in contemporary times were discussed by Dr. George A. Shuster, former President of Hunter College, last Thursday and Friday nights in the Grand Hall of the RMC.

In his first address, on Roman Catholic education, Dr. Shuster pointed out that church schools were founded by both the original colonists and the nineteenth century immigrants.

These institutions were frequently subject to violent attacks and thus concentrated on keeping the flock together rather than making serious educational contributions.

"RELIGION BEHIND the Iron Curtain" was the topic of the speech. Shuster stated that the Communist persecutions are unique in history in that they are directed against all religions, not one particular group.

Their general goals are threefold; the removal of newspapers, schools, etc., a church subservient to the regime, and the campaign for the teaching of dialectical materialism.

Since World War II the Russian Orthodox Church has lost half of its numbers, the Roman Catholics have faced diminishing membership, as have the Baptists and the Jews.

In an attempt to avoid a jeremiad, Shuster remembered that he had known many Communists who went to church inconspicuously and cited one village where the authorities requested that the churches take up the teaching of the catechism since the local youths were becoming rowdy.

Speaking of the faith of the Russian people, Shuster believed that many feel an intense need for redemption. The Church faces the same problems in Russia as elsewhere; the rush to the cities and the collapse of family ties.

Since religious instruction is almost non-existent in the Soviet Union, the average student is likely to be highly uninformed in this area. In response to a question Dr. Shuster acknowledged that a similar situation exists in America, but felt that there is more concern about this problem, than formerly.