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Fuller Theological Seminary

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January 1, 1954

Dear Alumnus:

I am sitting in my spacious office in the new administration building, trying to absorb the arguments of Thomas Aquinas for the Trinity in the Summa Theologica; but my thoughts keep wandering from the stillness of the academic halls to you, the alumni, wherever you are--Chicago, Belgium, Long Beach, Japan, etc. I have a sense of unrest in the deep of the spirit. The feeling is similar to what I had when I finished a course in theology without having given you a full opportunity to ask all the questions on your heart. Remember 421 and 422? Just as we were coming to grips with reatus culpae and reatus poene in relation to the work of the First and Last Adams, the bell would ring. Or, in our work in inspiration? Just as we were ready to list the clinching arguments against neo-orthodoxy, the course ended. More and more I am realizing how fragmentary our teaching of necessity is; how each course ends as a cemetery of unrealized possibilities.

And now another year has slipped by, ushering us all nearer the final day of accounting. Well did we sing in chapel: "Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away; they fly, forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day." And well did we conclude: "Our God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come; be Thou our guide while life shall last, and our eternal home."

At this season of inventories and resolutions I find it natural to pause and search my own soul. Questions scuttle across my mind with great rapidity. How are the Fuller alumni? Is there loneliness? Is there a loss of convictions formerly held dear? Are there new problems not anticipated in seminary? Is there a sense of separation from the ties that corded us together while at Fuller? These rhetorical queries find no answer; I remain alone with my thoughts.

Why not imagine that we are one big class in theology and apologetics, so that over the years we can continue the discussions which we entertained with such profit together at Fuller? Some of you may wish to raise questions which were left unanswered in the seminary classes; others may range over problems that have developed subsequent to leaving school. All of us will be interested in the quandaries of others. I have no name to give this effort--perhaps "The Alumni Question Box" would do--but I would enjoy trying the idea out. Profit will come. It will serve as a means of holding our affections together. It can help keep the intellect from rusting. It can be of assistance to those who have real problems to solve. It can serve as a token proof that I am genuinely interested in each one of you.

If you have any insights along this line, send them along. If you would prefer that your question not be shared with others (because of its delicate or personal nature), just tell me and I shall attend to it personally. I do not have all of the answers, but I shall do my best. Make your questions crisp and to the point.

Such an exchange of thoughts will also give me an opportunity to keep you informed on the development of thought on the theological front. Our courses of study ought not to end with so accidental an event as graduation. It is not unlikely that we shall continue to learn throughout eternity, so-let us not dull the habit here and now.



Let me close with a few items about the Seminary. With this new building to draw faculty and students together, the morale of the school is kept at a good level. There is some complaining, but that is just part of the general struggle in sanctification. Seminary days are hard and demanding; and the flesh is weak. (Like the woman who said, "I'm glad my husband isn't perfect; I like to nag!") As Christmas vacation drew near, the steps of the students became light and carefree, a perfectly delightful change to observe. Heaviness gave way to fancy and joy. The Second Annual Missionary Conference is to be held when school commences again, Jan. 4-8. Speakers: John MacIntosh (Wycliffe), Austin Paul (African Inland Mission), William Thompson (Latin American Mission). The faculty are altogether delighted by this student initiative. We feel that Fuller will continue to be blessed of God as long as missions receives its proper emphasis. (The faculty have been requested not to give examinations next week--ahem.) The Conference will stress (a) Bible Translation, (b) Field Evangelism, and (c) Church Organization.

Mrs. Lindsell underwent major surgery last week. She is recovering on schedule. Dr. Price is feeling fine this year, for which we all give continued thanks. The rest of the faculty are well. And with Ernie's fine cooking in the new kitchen, the health of the student body is good. The faculty were just commenting the other day about how remarkably well the students have been over the years.

Dr. Smith was Santa Claus at the Christmas party. He was St. Nick at his best. Each time he as much as stood before the group he elicited peals of laughter from students and faculty--and especially the faculty. When referring to his distended stomach, he assured the group that the bulge was entirely made up of padding in the suit he was wearing, and that none of it was his!

Mr. Carlson has made the Seminary grounds look aesthetically attractive. The lawns are a rich green. Transplanted shrubbery from Highgate--alias Orange Grove--is growing firmly. (Now, if we could only rid Southern California of smog!)

Wouldn't it be fine if we could all assemble for an afternoon of prayer and worship and testimony, sharing with each other our joys and sorrows? But this must keep until our consummate joys in heaven. Happy New Year to all.

Cordially,

Edward John Carnell

P.S. Does the Seminary have your correct address?