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Fuller Theological Seminary

Jerry Sheppard

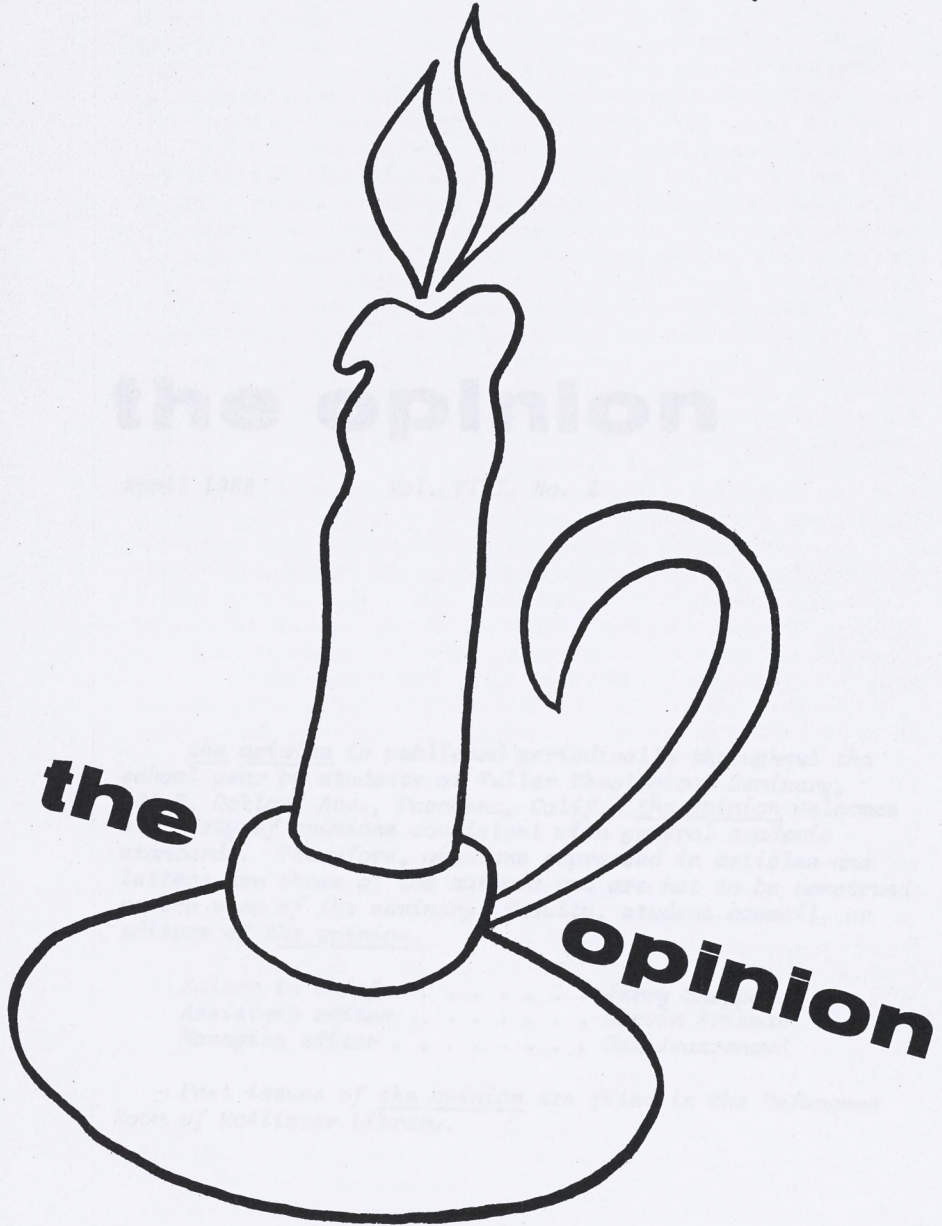
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the opinion

April 1969

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the opinion is published periodically throughout the school year by students at Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 N. Oakland Ave., Pasadena, Calif. 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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EXPOSÉ

by Terry Simonson

As a fourth year student and (hopefully) graduating senior, I feel it is my duty and Christian responsibility to warn underclassmen and even some unaware seniors about a plot right here at Fuller Seminary. Nay, it is more than a plot; it is a conspiracy. After seeking for some time to find the perpetrators of this conspiracy, I discovered two of the most unlikely groups behind it: the Philotheans and the Business Office. Friends, there is a conspiracy here at Fuller Seminary perpetrated against the single students by the Philotheans and the Business Office. The Philotheans, as the local lobbying group for "the married life", are seeking to make it as difficult and uncomfortable as possible for the single students to become a part of that massive American institution, "the married way of life".

This may seem ridiculous at first, but consider some of the facts here at Fuller:

1) Only single students are required to live in dormitory housing. Single students may have lived in apartments all through college, but when they get to Fuller they are required to live in dormitories. Although nearly all Fuller students are over 21, they have no choice in the matter - except to get married and then live where they want.

2) Besides living in the dormitories they are required to eat in the refectory. They have no choice in the matter. If they miss a meal, they pay for it anyway. It is only after a great deal of pressure and the inducement of much guilt by the Business Office that single students who work during meal times are allowed to miss those meals without paying for them.

3) According to the Questionnaire, 48% of the students felt that the refectory was unsatisfactory, even after the recent changes. Only 17% of those responding to the Questionnaire felt that the refectory was satisfactory. That this has been the case for many, many years is well known. Yet nothing significant is ever done about the situation. The only thing a single student can do to change his dreadful state is to get married or quit school.

After years of personal involvement in these facts of Fuller life the only logical explanation I can discover in all this is a conspiracy theory. Now some one may say that the proposed changes for single students show that there is really no conspiracy (or at least that someone is finally trying to

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stop it). But upon closer consideration of the proposed changes, we see they merely further the conspiracy. The proposed policy for next year is that seniors may live off campus with no questions asked, middlers may if they have a good reason, and juniors are required to live in the dorms (and eat in the refectory).

But after years of careful study, the Philotheans have realized that Seniors are no longer likely prospects. First of all, if a single student has lived through years of punishment here at Fuller, his "celibate drive" is so strong that he is hopeless. And by the time one becomes a senior at Fuller, he is usually married anyway. Of the 36 B.D. Seniors this year, only 6 are unmarried and living in the dormitory.

Seniors may live off campus because they are a lost cause anyway. Middlers may live off campus if they have a good reason. But what is a good reason? And who is to decide? Just watch and see if there will not be a Philothean or two on the committee that makes those decisions.

It is obviously clear that the only answer to the particular situation in which single students find themselves is the conspiracy theory. I am sure that there are still some students (probably married students) who do not believe. But my final argument should convince all doubters. If there is not a conspiracy here at Fuller against the single students, how else can the present situation be explained?

MAKING A POINT

by John Piper

"Recent medical research indicates that a wide variety of maladies, including rheumatoid arthritis and adrenal exhaustion, are sometimes directly related to the intense frustration and restlessness a man suffers when subjected to mindless and predatory assaults on his time by people who don't know how to come to the point."* From this I must conclude that the Fuller faculty, being healthy, is a remarkably resilient group of men.

One afternoon a few weeks before Christmas I stayed after class to see Dr. Smedes. There was one person before me, so I waited. Would you believe he detained Dr. Smedes in front of the mailboxes for thirty minutes! And the pathetic fact is that he could have said his piece - I kid you not - in less than five minutes. It was the best example of rambling, repetitive opinionizing I've ever heard. Finally I walked away. Dr. Smedes was more considerate. He stayed.

It is common knowledge (a la Mel White) that the main reason people can't come to the point is that they don't have one. What is not common knowledge is how to get a point to come to. Many students apparently think the best way to get to a point is to plunge into dialogue and hope for one to emerge out of a pooling of ignorance. What usually does emerge from such discussions and bull sessions is predominantly bull.

There is a much better way to get a point. It is an unpopular procedure, however, because it's about forty times harder than the discussion method. It is simply this: painstaking and systematic thought at the individual level. There are too many students who are quick to take up the time of their professors and classmates with a problem, and yet are unwilling to spend fifteen minutes of concentrated thought to work it out in the privacy of their own study.

If students did, however, strive for the habit of private inquiry (from which I do not exclude the use of books which, unlike teachers, are not hurting from overuse) the results would be helpful. Teachers would never be detained by superfluous questions. Class time would not be wasted on personal hangups. Students would gain more definitive and personal knowledge. And hopefully everyone would be healthier for having avoided the frustration of listening to pointless point making.

*from "Saturday Review", February 22, 1969, p. 30.

SEX AND THE SINGLE SEMINARIAN: A Response
by John Piper

Randall Shelley's argument in the March issue of the opinion went like this:

- 1) God has reasons or purposes for His commandments (Eph. 1:9-11, 3:11) and,
- 2) if we can know His purposes, we will be "better able to understand what the command is and obey it".
- 3) We can know God's purposes (Eph. 1:9).
- 4) Now, God condemns fornication (1 Cor. 9:10);
- 5) the reason He does is to prevent the birth of children who will not have natural families.
- 6) But today contraceptives can prevent the birth of children, so God's purpose is satisfied, and
- 7) sex between unmarried persons is not condemned.

I would like to show that proposition 2 is misleading; proposition 3, as Randall employs it, is false; proposition 5 (which for the argument to hold must necessarily be the only reason for the commandment) is not necessarily God's only reason; and consequently that the final conclusion is untrue.

Concerning Proposition 2

It is against the law to run stop signs. The reason, supposedly, is to prevent accidents. According to Randall's thinking to know this reason is to be enlightened that the real law is not "Don't run stop signs", but "Don't have accidents". Therefore, the only time you break the law in running stop signs is when you have an accident. Not a judge in the country would accept such a view.

Although this analogy points to the difficulties of basing one's action on the *raison d'etre* of the law instead of the law itself, it is not a telling objection to Randall's conclusion. Because there may be other reasons for obeying a stop sign than to prevent accidents (namely, to support the system of laws without which society as a whole could not function).

Concerning Proposition 3

The really crucial objection to the above argument is that proposition 3 as Randall used it is simply not true. By some fantastic exegetical prestidigitation he has converted one of the greatest Christological passages of the Bible into a conclusise one-line argument that "We can know God's

purposes". In spite of the context, he makes no qualifications as to which purposes, and so conveniently provides himself with an imaginary bridge by which to cross the contextual chasm between Ephesians 1 and 1 Corinthians 6.

But the bridge is imaginary because we do not know all of God's purposes and those we do know, we know only in part. God's ways and thoughts are not our ways and thoughts. What we see now we see through a glass darkly. Why should we risk our souls on the audacious presumption that we completely understand any of God's purposes?

Concerning Proposition 5

If the objections against proposition 3 are rejected, there remains another area of difficulty. For Randall's argument to hold, the prevention of the birth of babies without natural families, must be the only reason God forbade fornication. For if this were not the only reason, then other reasons would exist which the use of contraceptives may not satisfy. In which case fornication would remain a culpable act.

Randall cites four scriptures to support this fifth proposition: Genesis 12:3, 1 Timothy 3:4, Ephesians 6:1, Exodus 20:12. These scriptures speak of the role of parent and child and point to the importance of the family structure in God's scheme of creation. This particular step in the argument is a flagrant non sequitur. Since God likes children to have families, therefore the only reason He forbade fornication was to insure that all children would have families. That simply doesn't follow. God, for some reason totally unknown to us, may also like to have the sex act performed only in marriage. It is an argument totally from silence to say that the only reason God forbade fornication was to prevent babies without families.

Conclusion

In summation then:

- 1) We never know God's purposes in their completeness;
- 2) it is by no means certain therefore that the only reason God forbids fornication is to prevent the birth of homeless children (in fact, I believe a

very strong case could be made from the Scripture that God's purposes were much more profound),

3) and consequently contraception does not remove God's condemnation of fornication.

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John Piper is a graduate of Wheaton College and a Junior at Fuller Theological Seminary.

AN OPEN LETTER TO MR. SHELLEY
by Ted Profitt

Yours is a fine example of what not to do in exegesis. It is not even good eisegesis. It is irrational and arrogant to assume that it is necessary to know "why?" before obeying. Our first parents were told why not to eat of the fruit, yet they disobeyed. Knowledge does not lead to obedience.

You have failed to show you have true gnosis. Is reproduction really the key to an understanding of God's prohibitions against intercourse outside of marriage? Consider the following.

Scripture forbids and denounces homosexuality, bestiality, prostitution (cultic and non-cultic), and adultery. Homosexuality cannot produce offspring, nor can bestiality. Prostitutes rarely give birth, they know their trade too well to let pregnancy interfere with it. If adultery should issue in offspring, so what? Would not the offspring be within a family structure. Therefore, the fear of child-birth can hardly be the basis to Scripture's prohibition against what you espouse.

A closer look at the evidence, counselor, may convince you you have no case. Adultery (you failed to distinguish it from fornication) may be seen basically as theft. Just as idolatry takes God's glory and gives it to another, so adultery takes another man's wife, taking the intimacy that is theirs. Fornication takes another's chastity.

"The two shall become one." That relationship, so completely expressed in intercourse, was to be a relationship not shared

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with the rest of the family or with other humans and was to be for life. You would share yourself with so many that in time you will lose yourself. What you advocate can only lead to depersonalization, not personal self-fulfillment. You, made in God's image, would defile it, would efface it, would be more animal than man.

It appears that you are hung up on sex. You do not distinguish between pre-marital sex and pre-marital intercourse. (Cf. the most recent seminary blurb on the peg board beneath the clock in Payton Hall.)

Basically, you fail to realize that what you advocate is forbidden, not because it will end in reproduction (see above), but because like homosexuality, bestiality, it is unnatural and dehumanizing.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, ... Wherefore, God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves; who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. (Rom. 1:21-25)

You are a creature. You must either control yourself or be controlled by self, hence serve self. The decision is yours. No one can make it for you. But what you advocated is called "unclean". And God can only be approached by that which is clean (Isa. 6:5-7). The crux of the matter is simple. The body of one saved is a temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19) and as such should not be defiled. Finally, "Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (1 Cor. 6:13). Fornication dishonors the body, thus dishonoring God. Prayerfully consider this and your beliefs and actions in light of it.

REPLY TO ARTICLE PROPOSING LICIT FORNICATION
by Ralph D. Winter

I do not object to the apparatus whereby a specific Biblical rule is set aside in favor of a different time and place, the inner reason or purpose of God being maintained intact. There are already countless examples in modern church life whereby we have set aside special Biblical rules (e.g. women must not speak in church) and have different rules that are nevertheless faithful to the inner meaning of the Biblical prescription. This may be called "the transculturation of the Biblical revelation". We must grant that times and situations change so steadily and inevitably and extensively that this process of changing the rules is not optional. We cannot merely hang onto the explicit Biblical rules and be sure that we retain their spirit. This is, of course, what happened to the Pharisees. Theirs was an honest attempt to go back to the meaning of Moses and they got bogged down with a proliferation of little rules that by no means guaranteed the preservation of the original intent of the Mosaic legislation.

On the other hand, just because transculturation is essential and unavoidable is no sign it is not hazardous. It is especially hazardous, note well, when it happens unnoticed, and a whole society gets to feeling differently about something and changes the rules without anybody drawing special attention to the fact. But proper transculturation is also perplexing and difficult even with the most thorough study.

Thus the case in point. Quite likely the one-page analysis in the opinion of the inner meaning of the Biblical proscription of fornication cannot give all of the author's reasoning. But surely the reader of the opinion may be expected to find it difficult to leap from four proof texts to the conclusion that the purpose of the prohibition of fornication is to prevent children from being brought into the world outside of a family. Indeed, I see hardly any connection whatsoever between texts cited and the conclusions.

As a matter of fact the assumption that the only significant feature in fornication is physical procreation is about as crude a reduction as the typical Catholic attitude toward

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birth control. The Catholics say that the only reason for sex is babies and therefore if the intent is not to produce a child, sex is sinful. In a somewhat parallel this piece on fornication says that the only thing wrong with fornication is that you might produce a child and that contraceptive sex is therefore amoral. (What he is saying of course does not logically restrict itself merely to unmarried people. In a society where all females can take the pill, married or unmarried, his axiom proposes that any kind of sex at any time is unobjectionable to Biblical revelation - the only significant problem is to avoid "the natural production of ...children...outside of a family".)

Note then how the purely physical interpretation of the sexual act thus allows the celibate priest to ban all sex and the single seminarian to permit all sex. The priest thinks that there are no significant psychological dimensions to sex. The single seminarian thinks that sex is beautiful, so beautiful that he wants to avoid deprivation of its beauty. But he also underestimates the psychological significance of sex; he does not mention any emotional involvement related to it.

Let's be kind to single people, priest or seminarian, and forgive them for not understanding all that sex involves. Can they be kindly to married people and give them some credit for learning things on the basis of experience which the single person does not yet have? We must also excuse the male seminarian for not fully understanding the female physique and psyche. However hazardous, it is possible to generalize. Girls think about love; boys think about sex. Neither fully realizes what the difference is or ought to be. (Maybe the only way to find out is to get married.) These basic differences almost guarantee misunderstanding between the sexes apart from long experience. What boys want in a girl (or think they want) is someone who is as sexually alive as they are. What girls want (or think they want) is someone who is faithfully affectionate but not basically or even directly interested in sex. For a girl sex is a good place to end, but not a good place to start. The main thing is to be glad that the boys and girls can't make each other over in their own image. And so on.

The specific point related to the desirability or undesirability of fornication (or adultery) is that sexual involvement is more physical and is profoundly emotional, especially for girls who are not frigid. (Free wheeling fornication or prostitution is more likely less damaging and more acceptable

to girls who do not respond normally.) Furthermore, lurking behind all the statistics about contemporary fornication is the recurring fact that far fewer girls are so inclined than boys, that the girls that become involved are much more likely to be involved with only one person than are the boys, and that even in spite of considerable male exasperation with them, girls relentlessly grope for some kind of security as part of, or even as a condition of, the involvement. These significant differences are constantly underestimated by the boys, who develop endless ploys to explain them out of the way or brush them aside. The girls, on the other hand, instinctively recognize that, no matter what they are by nature, our society does demand greater flexibility and malleability on their part; their resulting (perhaps even) eagerness to cooperate may deceive not only the boys but themselves.

Obviously something has to give when a society chooses to delay physical union between the sexes, and (for reasons either of custom or of economics) postpones the average union five years beyond what is indicated from physiology.

The facts cited above mean, however, that avoidance of fornication is much more of a physical frustration to the boys than to the girls. (This is one reason why a double standard is so pervasive, and, in one sense, logical.) They also mean that fornication involves a much more serious psychological distortion for the girls than for the boys. In our society at this time, then, you have to decide which sex will be least damaged by the rule you come out with. To sum up, where marriage is postponed, as in our society, prohibition of fornication is harder on the boys than the girls and sex-without-security is harder on the girls than the boys. It is understandable that a boy (whose marriage has been delayed) would earnestly wonder if fornication cannot be allowed. But in view of the fact that this merely creates what is possibly a more serious problem for the girl, it seems likely that earlier marriage, with continued prohibition of fornication, is a more excellent way.

A further note about earlier marriage: statistics reveal that 1) earlier marriages are on the increase, and that 2) they are not thus far as stable. It is likely that as young people from more stable families see their way clear to earlier marriage that earlier marriage will tend to be more stable. Postponement of parenthood is what birth-control technology allows with less harm than childless fornication. One pitfall of earlier marriage is, of course, the interruption of the girl's education when children are not postponed. This produces an imbalance between the husband and wife which is admittedly a problem.

These are, admittedly, only part of the factors that need to be considered in the attempt to deal faithfully with the Biblical revelation in this area. But perhaps even this discussion will show that the matter is more complicated than the article implied last issue.

BLUE THEOLOGY AND YELLOW JOURNALISM
by Roger Minassian

Randall Shelley's article, Sex and the Single Seminarian, was both an evidence of incredible "theology" and of irresponsible journalism. In fact, to accept his non sequiturs as theology would not only be a disgrace to the Queen of Knowledge, but also her rape. One hardly knows where to begin in refuting his "argument". As every young Christian knows, there are two giants stirring around inside of him: God and Sex. Yet only one of these can have mastery. To yield to the wanton desires of sex is to be an adulterer or a fornicator and a slave of Sex. In this case, God cannot have mastery. One need only remember the great saints of the Church throughout history; fornication, even with barren women, was hardly one of their calling cards. History also tells us that Hebrew monotheism arose in the midst of fertility religions in which Sex was god. Indeed, someone has said that the Christian religion exists only to control the sex drive. Simplistic as that may be, it does contain some truth. Though it is presumptuous to say that we must know all of God's purposes, the message of God's sexual prohibitions appears to be this: Sex is so powerful that if given reign in the sinful heart of man it will enslave body and spirit as none other. In fact, after speaking to single men burning with passion, Paul gives this warning to the married:

One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife and his interests are divided. And the woman who is unmarried, and a virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord that she may be holy in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. (1 Cor. 7:32-34)

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Even those who are married and in a sexual relationship blessed and ordained by God must beware of Sex's power!

Among scores of other verses, Mr. Shelley fails to come to terms with these.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be... Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor. 6:15, 18-20)

It is quite obvious from the context that adultery or fornication is the immorality of which Paul speaks. The Greek word used means sexual immorality. Let no one take comfort in some imagined difference between harlotry and today's rabbit morality. Our decline in harlotry is more than matched by our rise in free love. Furthermore, the number of offenses is of no consequence to Paul, a man may fornicate once or 1000 times and the injunction is still the same, "Don't." Need we say that applies to women as well? Significantly, we observe here, as in numerous other sexually prohibitive verses, that the matter of children is not even worth mentioning. Surely, if the purpose of God's sexual prohibitions centers about the possibility of offspring, he would not have been so obscure about it. Indeed, if this were his purpose, we may have a good case for homosexuality! However, the real issue is plainly put by Paul, "Who is god in your temple?"

In addition to that question, all of us must wrestle with this verse.

But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler - not even to eat with such a one. (1 Cor. 5:11)

Obviously, these few passages are hardly the foundation for a comprehensive theological argument: one does not kill a gnat with nuclear weapons. Hopefully, they will inspire all of us to do a little homework on the subject.

There is another important issue unearthed by the publication of Mr. Shelley's article, that of responsible journalism. Having been editor of a number of school and church newspapers, I well know the desperate search for material to meet each deadline. I am also aware of the poor quality of much of what is submitted to an editor. Yet it is a cardinal axiom to go to press with only "all the news that is fit to print", not just all the news. Better to have no news at all than to have a scandal sheet. I believe that Mr. Shelley's article was published purely out of a desire for sensationalism that has no place in an ostensibly scholarly journal.

As stated on the title page of each opinion, articles are to be "consistent with general academic standards". Mr. Shelley's argument hardly deserves that distinction, logically or theologically. It appears to me that the editors of the opinion have only tattered the trust of the trustees, cooked the cool of the contributors, aggravated the anxiety of the alumni, and smudged the scholarship of the seminary. In this they may have been eminently successful and eminently culpable. Their timing probably could not have been worse for those who are their fellow laborers. In these days when many of the Fuller student body are seeking to be a responsible voice about real academic reform, such jejune indiscretions are disproportionate fuel for the fires of faculty reaction and inaction.

LOVE IS...

by David Olson

If I speak with the tongues of Billy Graham and Peter
Marshall;

but have not love,
I am as welcome as a morning alarm clock
or a horn at a long stop light.

And if I can make alarmingly accurate pronouncements,
and understand the mysteries of predestination,
cosmology, supralapsarianism, and know whole chap-
ters of the Bible verbatim,

And if I have faith so as to remove mountains of homework,
but have not love,

I am nothing.

If I give away all my money to the Fuller Fund, church, and
Young Life,

And if I am raked over the coals by non-Christians,
but have not love,

I gain nothing.*

LOVE IS Patient.

And what is patience to the members of the impatient
generation

Who cry for equality now,
for justice now,
for freedom now?

Patience is saying, "I will try to understand...
what my professor is saying;
what the core curriculum does;
why the business office is rigid;
why housing regulations are such;
the purpose of original languages;
the need for much reading;
the faculty's position;
a fellow student's background."

Patience is trying to understand.

But more,
patience is also saying, "Let me help you...
Professor, communicate;

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earned his B.A. from Fresno State College, Fresno, Calif.*

Seminary, study the curriculum;
Business office, see the needs of students;
Faculty, make the language program meaningful;
Professor, choose the material;
Faculty, see the students' position;
Student, understand my background."

Love is patient, and

LOVE IS Kind.

And what do we know of true kindness,
We who have been reared in evangelical charlatanism?

Kindness is recognizing as a person...

Steve Dean, campus custodian;
Mrs. Dussert, receptionist;
Mrs. Smith, registrar secretary;
Mrs. Pugh, faculty secretary;
our professors;
chapel speakers;
middlers;
missions students;
hitch hikers.

And kindness is being myself with another person.

not a user,
nor seeker,
nor student,
nor listener,
nor classmate,
nor driver,
but a person.

LOVE IS Not Jealous.

But we know of jealousy,
for we live in America, the affluent society,
where every man's neighbor has more than he
(or so advertisers would have us believe).

Jealousy is comparing...

my car with Mel's;
my income with my dentist friend's;
my library with Dr. Harrison's;
my voice with Lowell's;

my chin with Phil's;
my appeal with Dan's;

But love is not jealous, nor

IS LOVE Boastful.

Not boastful! it says to the generation which believes
that it can do anything.

Boasting is...

comparing your ____ with mine;
name dropping of a play
or a book;

asking a fellow's grade so he will ask mine;
noting how long I have known Dr. Hubbard;
asking a question to give an answer;
asking about your paper when mine is done;
a challenge to a game of call pool;
offering my opinion.

No, love is not boastful, and

LOVE IS Not Arrogant

Though we are of the student generation
Which says, "History is dead, now only lives.
And we are now".

For arrogancy condemns...

lectures,
lecturers,
chapel speakers
songs,
reading lists,
student council members,
preachers,
churches.

But love is not arrogant
nor boastful
nor jealous.

Love is patient and kind.

*Adapted from HIS, November, 1967.

CHRIST AND THE KALEIDOSCOPE
"I am the light of the World"
by Jay Jarmon

Paul wants to be a quarterback so he reads all the current literature on techniques and fundamentals, watches the Pro's play on television, practices three hours daily and then puts his own team through its paces on Saturday night. Sue wants to make her own clothes, so she takes home economics classes, reads fashion magazines, watches her mother sew, and then designs and tailors herself a new suit. Frank wants to cultivate his relationship with Jesus Christ so that he can operate with joy and assurance as a Christian person at every level of his active life, so he ... what? He misunderstands a sermon each week, gets bored by a lecture on predestination in Sunday School, prattles prefatory prayers, loses out to temptations he can't talk about, and winds up feeling like a flop with a false face on.

There is a lamentable absence of true to life patterns for the Christian faith. Vital and viable examples of commitment to Jesus Christ as a lived reality are so scarce that this may well be the greatest problem in ministering to our student generation. They want to see faith happen. Impatient with promises and proclamations, they want to see someone produce. In every other area of life young people watch their heroes "do it" - they only hear heroes of faith discussing it. Talk is cheap.

Part of the problem is theology. It is propositional where it should be personal. The church can no longer be merely a dispenser of doctrine. Young people are not disposed to accepting absolutes or a prioris. Impersonal plans and programs are strictly for computers. Unless assertions are reinforced by flesh and blood actions and attitudes, the modern student is obliged to reject them out of hand. The great cry "hypocrisy" is only the echo of church people's tendency to divorce belief from basic behavior. Also we are saddled in the church with a subtle "inference from the interim" which relegates theology to a narrowly ideological realm. We are guilty of semi-consciously appropriating a kind of suspended animation theory of the Christian life. On one hand (back then) there was the resurrection - on the other hand (who knows when) is the rapture. We dutifully receive both past revelation and future reward but how about current reality? Youth demands a contemporary Jesus Christ. This "Now Generation" isn't about to center its life around a gap between reminiscence and expectation.

Part of the problem is tradition. It is life-denying where it should be life-affirming. Our culture is now in the process of breaking away from a pejorative Puritanism, but the church, in order to maintain its strange dichotomy between sacred and secular, has put itself in the unfortunate position of being a bastion of prudishness. It is clear to most people that the ethical drift from religion-in-general is "fun is suspicious" and "self-denial is salutary". The church reflects a neo-asceticism in its standardized codes of conduct and studied avoidance of unsafe subjects.

Too much traditional religious indoctrination is based on a monastic pattern of withdrawal from life. Worship, prayer, devotions are viewed in terms of detachment. J. A. T. Robinson socked the solar plexis of conservative Christendom when he posed commitment to Christ in terms of involvement with and engagement in the world. Faith has to be as conclusive in practice as it is in precept for the coming generation. The happy, well-adjusted, sensitive and sensible pagan is the biggest threat to critically minded young believers, and rightly so. If tradition has so blighted the Good News that it is no longer good, then it ought not to be accepted. (In this same sense, I have a great deal more respect for "atheists" who reject an idolatrous caricature of God than I do for "Believers" who give allegiance to a mockery of Biblical revelation.) "Technical Christianity", or that brand of faith grounded strictly on do's or don't's, is simply no longer marketable commodity in the freedom-seeking-student context.

Part of the problem is timidity. Being real is risky. Maintaining a now-oriented theology and elevating the immediacy of personal need over a worn out tradition is costly. The line between selling out to worldliness on the right and backward-looking religiosity on the left is a razor's edge. We are so afraid of even talking about being ourselves as Christians that it is obvious why there are so few dynamic witnesses to the transforming truth of the Gospel in every-day existence.

Philosophically, the answer is to be found in the Incarnation. Jesus, by the very act of focusing Himself into flesh abrogated the arbitrarily propositional revelation of Old Testament theology. Moreover, His loose handling of oppressive tradition in favor of personal involvement transcended the rigid and formal pseudo-religious categories of His time. Both His identity (God as a real person) and activity (God doing real things) were unendurably scandalous. He risked an authentically religious life and consequently paid the price.

Practically, the answer is to be found in our incarnating our beliefs by living out the implications of our faith openly and honestly. By word and deed, discerning disciples can supply the talking, walking illustrations of Christian reality so sorely needed. Aspects of theology and tradition which undermine the rich apprehension of the fullness and freedom of life "in Christ" must be jettisoned. Now I am not advocating a shock for shock's sake, rebel without a cause ministry. Both theology and tradition are essential. But they are redemptive only to the degree that they can be applied with significance to any given circumstance. Jesus was the Light of the World and He is the same Person today. Teenagers see life through a kaleidoscope. Too often, religion is that somber, opaque splotch which inhibits the gayly shifting splinters of cut glass experiences. We must help them discover that Jesus is the light by which all the other facets of their lives take on color and significance. I am continually amazed at the contrast between pulsating activity and empty faces. Physical vigor belies a lethargy of spirit. "Groovy" things only occasionally "happen". A heartily Christian strategy of life would spark the whole of experience. But how can we introduce them to Jesus Himself? A relationship with the accepting, approving, and transforming Lord of life is no "put on", "cop out", or "hang up" - but how to articulate this fact? Again, talk is cheap.

We must choose to minister after the example of Jesus who was the truth He talked about. We cannot allow religion to be something other than or separate from or exclusive of "real life". We must seek in our ministry to establish a laboratory of life - to establish an experimental fellowship in which we can redefine and re-explore our multi-dimensional lives in relation to the life-enhancing spirit of Jesus Himself and all in company with others whose lives reflect His love.

In gearing programs and personnel for such a ministry to the whole person in a singularly Christian context, the primary principle is that of adoption. We must provide emotional, psychological and spiritual orphans with an environment in which they can grow at their own rate. Of course, this demands time. Jesus devoted three years to twelve men. For us, this means as much time as we can give, and we must be jealous even of the limited time we do have. We need an intensely qualitative as opposed to a casually quantitative concept of relationships. Day-long trips with two or three young people are good, week ends with a handful are better, and an eight-day caravan with eight or ten students can be

most rewarding. Camps and retreats are productive mainly because of the radical change in environment. But a retreat can be dangerous. There is something very wrong with an emphasis which fulfills itself by psyching up the kids with "head in the clouds" "spiritual" experiences which fade into despair the first week after camp. Retreats can more realistically construct sensitivity or "trust" groups which will continue at home. Speakers can entertain legitimate personal and group problems and Bible studies can equip young people with tentative, preconsidered alternatives for behavior in commonplace scenes of stress.

Weekly meetings should also reflect this concern for practicality. Let's let the kids talk! No one knows anything until he can articulate it. Discussion not declaration is at a premium. Every discussion should focus on current concerns of the group. For each topic discussed the fellowship group should schedule a corresponding activity. Examples:

- Sportsmanship - game nights, church teams, attend school games
- Studies - students do research and reporting
- Dancing - Church-sponsored dances or leaders could help chaperone school functions
- Movies - group attendance at different types from Doris Day to Ingmar Bergman, help kids develop critical attitudes toward communications media
- Family Life - play roles, interview parents
- Morals - debate petty and profound moral issues; cigarettes to Viet Nam
- Music - a lot can be done with record lyrics
- Worship - rewrite parables in terms of their own frame of reference

The list could be continued indefinitely, suggesting possible areas of exploration but always focusing the inquiry in terms of meaningful images and then acting out the conclusions drawn.

Finally the youth minister must allow himself to love his young people. I say "allow" because genuine affection and acceptance is difficult to express. I remember very little of what was said by the man who introduced me to Jesus Christ - but I will never forget his warmth and concern for me as an individual.

The primary means for a meaningful ministry is a person who is consistently transparent to the enlightening presence of Jesus

Christ. The ultimate goal of such a ministry is a young person who in turn permits the brilliance of the Lord to filter throughout his own life.

"If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." 1 John 1:8

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