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Balaam's Ass - Issue 3

Fuller Theological Seminary

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VIETNAM: AMERICA HAS A WONDERFUL PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE

Facts and Figures of the Indochina Wars:

1. The most intensive and indiscriminate bombing in history
2. The bomb tonnage is approaching three times the total used by the U.S. in all theaters of WW II
3. Over 54,000 U.S. soldiers are dead
4. Over 698,000 N.L.F. and North Vietnamese soldiers are dead
5. South Vietnamese civilian casualties are estimated at over 1 million (This is 300,000 more people than live in San Francisco)
6. Over 121,000 Saigon government soldiers are dead
7. North Vietnamese civilian casualties are also over 1 million
8. South Vietnam is the most militarized country in the world—one in every nine people is in the army
9. Over 40,000 South Vietnamese are being held as prisoners for their political beliefs
10. Over a third of the 18 million people in South Vietnam have become refugees since 1964 (This is twice the number of people who live in Los Angeles)
11. Cambodia's economy has deteriorated rapidly since 1969, rubber exports have dropped from $20 million annually to zero, and she is now dependent on the U.S. for economic survival
12. Over 1 million Cambodians have been driven from their homes since May, 1970
13. Laos, between 1966 and 1969, endured the heaviest per square mile bombing in history and suffered the highest per capita casualty rate in the world
14. This is an undeclared war fought in the name of democracy
15. It has cost over 150 billion dollars in American money. (The 1969-70 budget for the state of California was only 4.5 billion dollars)

*(Facts and figures obtained from: "Indochina: 1971. Requirements for Peace," published by the American Friends Service Committee, and "Mr. President, the Jury is In," L.A. Times, March 21, 1971)

These are incredible and indicting statements, yet a large number of Americans and many Christians are no longer horrified by the facts of the Indochina War. As Rev. George F. Regas said on March 7, 1971, "the scandal of the Vietnam war is that it no longer scandalizes us Americans. We've heard the body-count so frequently, watched the television's reports of the suffering so long, and allowed the political rhetoric to mesmerize us that now we are numbed, anesthetized and silent."

It is not too late for us of the FTS community to speak out again the immorality, inhumanity and horror of this war. We must speak our minds and mobilize our consciences and indignation in an effort to bring a measure of peace and justice to a devastated, divided land.

How can students effectively speak out against the war? The staff of B.A. would like to suggest several possibilities:

1. Send letters or telegrams to your congressman and senators informing them of your position on the war.
2. Withhold your 1970 income taxes or the 10% Federal tax on your monthly phone bill. (The latter was avowedly established to defray war costs.) In speaking about tax withholding, Peter Barnes said, "Even a democratic government does not need its citizens' approval to conduct an imperial venture; it needs only their bodies and cash. To surrender these is to make war possible. To choose to surrender them is to accept moral responsibility for that war (New Republic, 4, 10, 1971, p. 16)."
3. Investigate your part in the newly formed Peace Committee at FIS under the chairmanship of Sheldon Burkhalter.
4. Attend the meetings of the Peace Mobilization Center, Sunday evenings at 7:30 at the All Saints Episcopal Church.
5. Support the protest measures which will be discussed by the Senior class.
6. Write an article for Balaam's Ass or The Opinion.
"In the sight of so many thousands of civilians and soldiers slain, injured, and crippled, of bodies emaciated, of forests destroyed by fire, God confronts us with the question: "Where art thou?" (Rabbi Abraham J. Herschel)

---D.L.S.

REVELATION AND REVOLUTION

"The revolutionary ferment permeating the world in our day has not come from Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam or Animism. These religions have yet to give any impulse to men to alter drastically their social structures to provide justice for the common man (G.E. Wright). Although the Greeks coined the word democracy, they poured little humanizing content into its meaning. Plato's Utopia is more terrifying than Orwell's 1984 because Plato desired to happen what Orwell feared might happen (A. Koestler). Communism could only have come within the Hebrew-Christian tradition. Marx the Jew and Engel's ex-protestant inveighed against the Religious Establishments of their day, charging them with hypocrisy for their indifference to the human anguish caused by the Industrial Revolution. Wherever the Bible goes, social conscience is awakened and people begin to stir from the torpor of the centuries."

(Dr. Arthur F. Glasser, Unpublished paper, Urbana, 1970)

CONFESSIONS, MANURE SPREADERS, AND OTHER THINGS

Some students and faculty at FTS feel a tinge of reluctance and dissatisfaction with the term a "crisis of personhood." Such a term, for many, implies the old, sentimental, personalistic Christianity of the past. They expect the return of the old game - "I can confess more sins than you can." Others associate "crisis of personhood" with the dynamics of a perpetual sensitivity group. The Christian life becomes a contest between the most articulate feeling dumpers. The winner operates like a monstrous biological manure spreader, with his feelings flying in every direction, hoping to cultivate new relationships. Unfortunately, many are burned by the superabundance and tyranny of his gut-level emotions. At this point, friend, relax, for neither extreme does justice to the contentive content of "crisis of personhood."

Certainly a crisis of personhood refers to the importance of student-faculty relationships at the personal level, but to rely on the individualistic aspects alone denies the importance of structures and institutions. Yes, students and faculty should be more sensitive to another's problems and frustrations. However, can we ignore the very nature of our seminary environment?

FTS by its enrollment and recruitment procedures stands isolated and distant from the secular world. Practically everyone is a Christian. Any questioning or challenging of the practices, habits, or dogmas of the institution elicits suspicion. Some challenges reflect a rather weak attempt by a student or faculty member to play the role of a non-Christian. Yet, students and faculty alone serve as the major critics of the relevancy and credibility of FTS's program to the secular world. FTS suffers because it doesn't benefit from the in-house criticism and support of non-Christians or Christians of differing theological views. Dr. Thomas F. Torrance, a visiting professor in theology last quarter, expressed his own need for the diversified environment of a university in which to teach and write. The critical dialogues occurring among faculty and students of widely varied beliefs stimulates the search for truth. Educational experiences benefit from the controversy generated by conflicting opinions. Are Christians alone the best critics of church history, homiletics, systematic theology, counselling and missions?

What can be done about the problem? Within the last year or so, there was an opportunity for FTS to relocate itself in the UCLA community. For the present time at least, this possibility has been abandoned. The most apparent corrective might consist of a concerted effort to bring sociologists, philosophers, historians and artists of different faiths or non-believers to the seminary as guest lecturers. Students also could be encouraged to enroll in an occasional course at another university or seminary. Also, FTS leadership should look for an opportunity to establish an academic liaison with another university. Caltech or Occidental College offer clear possibilities.
As an additional tool in evaluating its effectiveness and adequacy, FTS ought to consider polling the alumni. Their criticisms and suggestions would provide valuable information as the seminary plans and changes in the future.

Isolation and detachment that allow and, in fact, encourage ignorance of secular man's thoughts and frustrations imperil the wholeness of any seminary. The addition of new, varied voices to the FTS environment offers a positive remedial factor to the existing crisis of personhood.

--D.L.T.

A WORD FROM A DEAR SISTER

Some seminaries throughout the country are structuring programs to promote a more personalized education and a greater sense of community. At Fuller's sister seminary on the east coast, Gordon-Conwell, a unique course has been initiated in the first year curriculum. "The Christian in the Contemporary World" is a seminar reading course composed of approximately twelve students and two professors who read a paperback book each week on an issue relevant to the Christian's task in the world. Such books as the following have been read: Mission In Metropolis, Jesse Jai McNeil; Emerging Shapes of the Church, D.S. Schuller; The Council, Reform and Renewal, Hans Kung; A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology, William E. Horden; Man in the Modern Theater, Nathan Scott; and The Difference in Being a Christian, Stephan Neil. The students and professors meet once a week, usually over coffee, to discuss the book.

There are many fringe benefits from this type of informal seminar. Everyone, students and professors, get to know each other better and the possibility for deepening relationships between them is increased. It also affords students an opportunity, early in their education, to get a feel for the breadth and depth of contemporary theology, the role of the Christian in the world, and the direction the church is moving.

We of B.A. applaud such innovations and strongly urge FTS to implement similar courses in the near future.

--D.L.S.

A REPLY TO DR. BROMILEY

"And when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age." (Luke 3:23) Using this text in chapel last week, Dr. Bromiley discussed the implications of Jesus' preparation period for students who are today preparing for the ministry. He asserted that patience is demanded during this period. He advocated that students learn patience by developing a sense of particularity. Some students want to rush into the ministry, but even many of them would be in agreement with Bromiley since they see the need of preparation. He also said that there is a "particularity," a specific ministry, for which we prepare and for which we should be patient. Youth, he continued, seem to lack a sense of particularity.

Within these boundaries of preparation and particularity, we are driven to a deeper analysis of student unrest. What are the causes of impatience? Today, educational institutions across the country face student impatience. Even at Fuller there are expressions of it; for example, the critical responses by many theology students during the trustee-faculty-student dialogue three weeks ago. We must go beyond Bromiley's simple formula and ask if the seminary's process of preparing students stimulates unrest.

Specifically, if young seminarians lack a sense of particularity, then how is FTS contributing to this deficiency and how can the seminary open avenues of discovery that lead to a heightened sense and knowledge of particularity? Note here that during the above mentioned dialogue, SWM students expressed an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward the education. A note on the Board of Declaration suggested that these students have a greater and more defined sense of identity and direction, i.e., a greater sense of particularity than theology students. Dare anyone ask the question, "What are the implications of this situation for the parent school - the school of theology?" Perhaps FTS should only admit students who have had at least two years of work experience prior to application.
The question of whether the seminary adds or detracts from the student's sense of preparation and particularity demands a critical self-evaluation by FTS leadership. Bodies at rest tend to stay at rest. Educational institutions seem to validate this law; many have no structures for self-evaluation. I wonder if seminaries, and in particular Fuller, have even asked how does one evaluate its educational endeavor. At many schools, pressure alone has caused them to react to student needs. At FTS, we, as Christian brothers, faculty and student alike, must evaluate the impatience and the lack of specific direction among students.

--John Irwin

Naked Came the Truth

Meaning is the ingredient which leaven's the daily bread; meaning energizes and sustains man's existence. According to Viktor Frankl, "man's search for meaning is a primary force in his life." Finding meaning and thus enduring their sufferings sustained many persons in the German concentration camps. In fact, Frankl insists that unless men found meaning in their sufferings in the camps, they soon died. In this regard, Frankl relates the following story. One of his patients, an inmate, dreamed that the day of his release would be March thirteenth. As the day approached, and it became apparent that it was unlikely that the man would be released, he began to falter. He fell ill on the twenty-ninth, and becoming delirious on the thirteenth of March, he died the next day.

Similarly, meaning is inextricably joined to knowledge. Knowledge is of no use if it is not meaningful. It must relate how what is known effects me in my life - how I piece together my fragmented existence. Meaning uplifts the spirit and brings gladness to the existential heart.

Kierkagaard aptly illustrates existential meaning in an early passage from the journals. "What good would it do me to be able to develop a theory of the state and combine all details into a single whole, and so construct a world in which I did not live, but only held the view of others; - what good would it do me to be able to explain the meaning of Christianity if it had no deeper significance for me and my life; what good would it do me if truth stood before me cold and naked, not caring whether I recognized her or not, and producing in me a shudder of fear rather than a trusting devotion."

Meaningful knowledge is gained in living out the process of life; not through the accumulating of academic knowledge. Meaningful knowledge arises and is created out of the struggles of one's existence; it cannot be manufactured or conjured up by education. In this way, knowledge is filled with meaning for the individual. Knowledge derived from others compared to knowledge derived from existential sources is like "laughing at a joke because someone has said that it is funny, not because one has understood it."

Theology must be careful not to encircle itself with defensive barriers which repel the person. Professors and students should be wary of theological systems in which no man can live. The seminary would do well to keep its ear peeled to the dissenting cries of students; perhaps they do have meaning. As Christians, we must guard against the loss of the Gospel's meaning in our lives. If the Gospel means nothing more to us than a list of historical happenings, we are men most miserable. If truth, orthodox or not, becomes a hard taskmaster, driving us further from the person, we have fallen under the curse of a man straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.

--A.E.T.

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Graffiti: God reads Barth
Dropping grades is part of a communist plot (seen in faculty restroom)