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CHRISTMESS

Christmess has come outside the manger,
Where Christmesses shiver and shoulder along
Thinking of presents and mistletoe...
Of Christ misbegotten
In an old man with whiskers.

Inside the cattle shift about
Disturbed by God’s intrusion
(You can't eat hay
with a babe in the manger,
especially a stranger like this one).

Christmess has come and gone outside,
But here the glow still decks the halls
With love:
  The God of service
Come to know a man made nervous
By a package left unpriced.

--Gerald H. Wilson
Integration or Communication

By Henry Venema

Fuller Seminary is an unusual school because there are no other seminaries in this country which also house a graduate school of psychology on the same campus. At Fuller we are attempting to communicate back and forth between the disciplines of theology and psychology in a way that few other schools have tried. This situation gives rise to unusual opportunities as well as inevitable problems. We have attempted to avail ourselves of the opportunities most directly by way of a series of integration seminars which every psychology student is required to take. Theology students are also invited to participate in these seminars.

During this term I am taking the first of these seminars and I have come to discover more clearly than ever before that integration is no easy matter. I am beginning to believe that the word integration is part of the problem. Somehow this word communicates the idea that either theology or psychology must eventually be subsumed under the other. I feel that this idea causes a good deal of mutual defensiveness on the part of both theologians and psychologists and prevents us from hearing one another and finding one another in a common cause to understand man better in his search for wholeness. How can all of us search meaningfully for a way to bring good news and freedom to our fellow man when the theologians feel that the psychologists are out to psychologize religion and vice versa, when the psychologists suspect that the theologians are solely interested in laying a heavy load of final truth on them? We cannot engage in a common search when we are afraid that one school is in some way out to swallow up the other.

The problem became a bit clearer to me recently during a couple sessions of our integration seminar. In the first of these sessions, Dr. Barker presented a lecture on his views of the apostle Paul's struggle with life as reflected in Romans 7. I happened to arrive about twenty minutes late in class and he was well into his lecture. Very quickly I got the feeling that he was lecturing in such a way as to leave no room for differences of opinion and discussion. I had the same feeling which I have so often experienced listening to a preacher expounding from the pulpit, that is, I felt put down and frustrated, angry, and imposed upon. At the same time I also felt sad and dejected because up to that day we had tried in class to struggle together and understand one another. It seemed that the little we had achieved was being wiped out in one fell swoop.
INTEGRATION OR COMMUNICATION (con't.)

Being angry and discouraged, I decided to leave when the time came to break up into little discussion groups. There seemed to be so little hope for something meaningful to come about after what I felt to be an authoritarian lecture.

It took about two weeks to get in touch with and sort out all that had gone on inside of me during that hour in class. In that time I discovered that with my departure I wanted to communicate several messages to Dr. Barker. I wanted to tell him that I was angry and disappointed but I also wanted to tell him that I felt sad and very alone in my struggle with my faith.

Coming back to class after two weeks, it became evident that Dr. Barker's lecture had stirred many feelings in many students and we spent that entire session sharing our struggles and concerns. Admittedly that one session didn't solve all our problems, but we were able to break down some of the barriers to communication. I didn't end up agreeing with Dr. Barker, or he with me, but we did end up talking together.

Thus, in the final analysis, what seemed a hopeless situation turned out to be a starting point for further discussion. This leads me to make the point that, if we are going to get anywhere with integration or communication between psychology and theology at Fuller, we first have to learn to listen to one another. Communication is impossible if we prejudge each other. On the other hand, if we can learn to recognize that theology and psychology are separate disciplines, we can contribute most to each other and to our respective fields of inquiry.
This sage piece of advice was handed down to me, when I entered seminary, from my father, who likewise received it as part of his ministerial training. In like spirit, I herewith deliver it and its simple but profound message to all Seminarians for their consideration and rumination. —David M. Watson

ADVICE TO SEMINARIANS

In promulgating your esoteric cogitations, or articulating superficial sentimentalities as philosophical psychological observations, beware of platitudinous ponderosity. Let your conversations possess a classified conciseness, comprehensibleness, coalescent consistency, and a concatenated cogency.

Eschew all conglomerations of flatulent garrulity, jupuné babblement and asinine affectations. Let your extemporaneous descantings and unpremeditated expatiations have intelligibility and veracious vivacity, without rodomontade or thronical bombast. Sedulously avoid all polysyllabic profundity, pompous prolixity, ventriloquial verbosity, and vaniloquent rapidity.
A PROPER VIEW OF THE MINISTRY

By Chuck Van Engen

Someone once said that the person who does not learn from the mistakes of history is destined to repeat them. But most of us never think of applying this truth to our views of the ministry. Most of us simply assume that, although many before us have really fumbled the ball, we will play the game flawlessly. But we won't fulfill our task properly unless we understand what that task is all about. If we unquestioningly step into our role as ministers, we will fumble around as much as the men before us.

But it's no wonder that we don't take time to think through a proper view of the ministry. We have been bombarded with so many erroneous ones that we have begun to think that it is all a matter of taste, rather than principle. We have begun to assume that the different styles of the ministry are all correct, just different. And we could name a host of different styles.

Take, for instance, a church I once attended that was run like a corporation. The pastor was the chief executive and the pew-holders were the employees who, ironically, paid for the privilege of doing what the "big boss" told them to do.

Or consider another church I saw that was run on the football-star basis. The pastor was the star, and every Sunday several thousand people came to watch him perform, hoping someday to be as great a star as he. (We have several churches of this kind in our area.)

Or I could tell you about the church that was run on the university model. The pastor was the all-knowing, all-wise holder of a doctorate. Each Sunday he would lay on his pupils precisely what they should learn for that week. The hymns were merely to keep people awake, and the prayer was a way of preparing the minds of the congregation to receive obscure truths from the great Logos.

Or take the church that was run on the political-campaign style. In this church the people assumed that the preacher was up for re-election each Sunday. The music director would call out the hymns as enthusiastically as any speaker would call for votes for his candidate. The offering was a means of continuing the political campaign; and the preacher's sermon was geared solely to getting votes.
A PROPER VIEW OF THE MINISTRY (con't.)

Or I could describe to you the Freudian church. The pews were as soft as any psychiatrist's couch. The lights were low and mournful; the music slow and sad. Everyone put on disturbed and burdened faces as they entered the sanctuary. And the preacher delivered tremendous counsel as to how to rid ourselves of terrible depression and fear.

And I could finish my travelogue of churches by letting you look into the modern-art style of church. On this idea of the ministry, the preacher is the one who is so high spiritually, that the people come to gain some of his insight through his mysterious and unintelligible pronouncements. In this kind of church the people comment on the greatness of the sermon in direct proportion with its obscurity. The more obscure the sermon, the more they comment, because they are sure that there is tremendous meaning and insight in what the man has said, even though they don't know what it is.

The list could go on. We are bombarded with so many bad examples of the ministry that we don't know how to look for a good one. And we've been so influenced by this bombardment that we think that the style of ministry is all a matter of taste. It is not. It is a matter of first basing oneself firmly on the Scriptures in terms of one's assumptions regarding the task. Then, and only then, are we free to allow those presuppositions to take form through our personalities. We can allow relativity of style only as the icing on the cake, not as the cake itself.

But where do we look? It is not my purpose here to try to give an adequate view of the ministry. It is my purpose to call us awake to the fact that each of us must be aware of the style our ministry is going to take, and make sure it lines up with our head knowledge of the Scriptures. Where do we begin to look? Let me simply suggest a few places which might whet your appetite.

For the kind of men who should be chosen as spiritual leaders, for example, we could examine the criteria used in Scripture. In Exodus, Moses had to choose seventy spiritual leaders for his people. What criteria did he use? Were they to be professional counselors? Scholarly Ph.D's? Heroes? No. They were to be men who "fear God, men of truth, hatingcovetousness..." (Exodus 18:21) And in Acts, when the seven deacons were to be chosen, were they Rabbinical scholars? Professional money-gatherers (like some denominations hire to handle their money drives)? No, they were to be men who were reported to be honest, filled with the Spirit and wisdom.
A PROPER VIEW OF THE MINISTRY (cont.)

Now I know that there are some passages which are standard references on this subject. But we must not be bound to those. There are many other references which can give us a hint about the nature of our task. For instance, recently I've been looking at 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 in this light. The problem Paul deals with in this passage is a wrong evaluation by the people of their leaders. And Paul responds with three pictures which tell us something of his view of the ministry. First he tells us in verse 5 what our attitude to ourselves should be—he calls himself a servant. (After all, Jesus said he who would be greatest should consider himself least in the Kingdom of God. But in contrast to this many preachers strut around like heaven-sent prophets.) Paul also tells us (in verses 6 and 7) what our attitude toward other ministers should be: although we differ in task, we are equal in importance. Although the workers in God's kingdom differ in terms of their job (some plant, others water), they are equal because the growth comes from God. None of them can take the credit for the growth, but all the jobs are essential contributions toward it. So no one job is more important than the other. And thirdly, Paul tells us what our attitude toward our ministry should be. He says we are paid according to our labor (verse 8). Most of us evaluate our faithfulness to God in terms of the results of our work. But God evaluates our efforts in terms of how well we did our assigned task, not in terms of what came from it. Thus, as in the parable, if God wants to reward those servants who worked two hours with a full day's wage, that is His business, not ours. (Of course, this does not mean we can't evaluate our effectiveness in terms of numerical success—as the SWM has shown us. It just means we can't evaluate our faithfulness to God on these terms.)

There are many other places to look, and much thinking to be done. Many of us will be involved in church work in some way, or involved in producing ministers who in turn will be in the churches. So we all must struggle with this question. What kind of ministry are we attempting to create? Are we football stars? Politicians? Scholars? Professionals? If we don't answer this basic question, we will be applying our head-knowledge to the wrong practices. May we carefully examine our task lest we foolishly run in where angels have made mistakes. It is a wise man who learns from the mistakes of others.
IN LOVE

We are a morose generation of bards and hymn-singers. Things do look bad upon closer inspection. For to sing the sun in its flight is a hapless task when father sun beats and burns us all.

Poets are homeless from examination. So while they secret themselves into privy councils of ravished song in wind and rain, They dare to chuckle and share a drink with words.

Lovers are sensitive folk, easily hurt, ignored into silence, like poets, seeing the glory of things but suspicious - convinced too of other things. Not so pretty but drab and bad.

Imposters there are who hardly breathe as they - But suppose and vulgarize and detest Him who knows better - thus faith dries up. Muses rancous; visions black; questions bite.

Shall we have a prophet who sees not so much the end of things and then the good, a large man To scarcely sigh and draw for us words of scarlet and dew Which we love back and love in faith.

--Steve Wilburn
WHERE IS ...?

By Edd Breeden

My brother in Jesus is leaving Fuller, or at least the M.Div. program. Hear the reasons! Especially you faculty! When he attends his classes at Cal. State L.A. and the professor says something in class his first reaction is, "Wow! I can use that in my relationship with people and in my ministry with the Lord!" When, on the other hand, he attends class at Fuller his reaction is, "Gee, that is kind of neat! If I store that in my brain for 6 years I might be able to use it sometime when I attend a pastors' convention."

THINK ABOUT IT! He is vocal yet many others are not. How many leave seminary because it is not "meaningful" to them? Most people learn to teach by watching carefully another teacher at work, to paint by watching another artist and seeing how he uses his brush and paint. You likewise learn to follow Jesus by watching Him work. But to watch Him you need to see Him. Where is Jesus in this school? In a book? Or a syllabus? Mentioned in the class on the Gospels? Possibly you heard someone mention something about Him, as if he were a lesser god, at the end of a prayer? Is He at the coffee table or the pool table? Where is Jesus? Is He in the financial system when people leave school for lack of funds? Do YOU see Him?

Okay, enough of the harshness. I do see Jesus in this school, a little. He usually takes second place to our intellectual discussions of how big is a mustard seed, or should we baptize infants or wait until they are in the third grade when they can make a decision for themselves. Dr. Fuller once said that he visited his seminary and the students spent their free time reading, meditating on and memorizing the Koran—we talk theology.

Let me say it another way. A Christian is not one who WORKS FOR Jesus, but one who LIVES WITH Jesus. And if Jesus lives with you it seems that he would get out of the house once in a while and be seen by others. But in conversation, when we are asked who our visitor is we call Him chance, luck or possibly even an illusion. If my exegesis is correct that's why Moses didn't make it to the Promised Land, because he didn't give God the credit when he got water from the rock for the people. If Jesus is living at your house give Him credit for what He does in your life, in your teaching, studying, etc. Let's find meaning in life at Fuller. After all, we are studying the Author of Life, aren't we?

THINK ABOUT THIS, IT DOES APPLY!

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.
While viewing Stanley Kubrick's critically acclaimed and publically condemned Clockwork Orange, I was confronted with the age old Christian problem of "free will." Ignoring the social and political problems raised by the film, Orange asks the viewer to consider what is left of a person when he is stripped of his ability to choose. Is right behavior or right choice more important, more moral?

Clockwork Orange is a stylized look into the near future when the most alive people unsuccessfully seek to validate their humanity through sex and violence. Alex, the anti-hero, is more real and likeable, despite his brutality, than the more conforming or adjusted members of his society. However, the viewer is relieved when Alex's vulgarity and violence are halted by his incarceration. Once in prison, Alex volunteers to undergo futuristic behavior modification. The modification is completely successful: Alex becomes excruciatingly ill when he tries to participate in sex or violence. Consequently, Alex behaves like a model citizen, a model human: All his anti-social behavior, all his acts of sin have disappeared. Transformed, he is perpetually the victim of others, especially his former prey. In the end, because of political complications, Alex is returned to his previous state.

Kubrick allows the viewers to experience a moral dilemma. In spite of Alex's transformed behavior, there is no triumph, no joy, in the change. The viewer feels safe but bored in response to the new Alex. There seems to be no future for this robot; there is no hope for anything more than the bland, inevitable "goodness." The viewer, in spite of his revulsion for and fear of the brute, is at least interested by the untransformed Alex and by the possibility for his change, for his regeneration. In other words, in the beginning and in the end of Clockwork Orange, Alex presents a picture of hope, of a possibility for man choosing to be other than he is; however, when he is stripped of his free will, in spite of his niceness, Alex presents a picture of despair, of an impossibility for man choosing to be other than he is. At one point, perhaps unartistically, Kubrick has one of his characters say, "When a man cannot choose, he ceases to be a man."

When as Christians, we consider Adam, we may question the importance of free will. When we look at the world around us, we may ask why God created us free rather than good. But when we view Alex, we get a glimmer of the answer.