the Opinion

"The Year Ahead At Fuller"*

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*...... and other thoughts
Dear Friends and Supporters of the Opinion,

Please receive in the spirit of charitable yet fierce criticism to which we all aspire yet seldom attain this, the first edition of the Opinion for the school year, 75-76. I set, as the general theme of this issue, "The Year Ahead at Fuller." Several representatives of campus concerns submitted articles under this head and their articles are herein reproduced. I was also the thankful recipient of two articles not specifically related to projects forthcoming, but on topics I am sure will be of interest to our readers.

As for the Opinion in the coming year, I am hoping to octuple the budget so that we may print on onionskin, bind in vellum and my salary might rise in proportion to tuition hikes. All seriousness aside, the announced theme for the next issue is the problem of world hunger. Articles on lifestyle, nutrition, giving institutions etc. are perfectly in order. Please submit articles on this topic, or on any other you might find compelling, by Wed. Nov. 26, so that the edition may be printed before the term ends.

I remain yours in the battle against soporificusness

R. McD.

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THE SPIRIT OF COMPETITION
Eileen Dunn

Our American system has its very foundation in and derives its powerful momentum from the spirit of competition, motivating if not manipulating our daily lives. Starting from our highest level of competition in our American system, we find capitalism. Time magazine's cover story on capitalism explicates philosopher, Adam Smith's view that self-interest is the great source of motivation in economic activity, which expresses itself in the drive for profit. Time presents this in a manner of positive concern for the survival of capitalism; but as Christians, should this be our motivational source for any area of our lives?

Keeping this in mind, I would now like to spend the major portion of this article on more immediately relevant issues we encounter as Fuller students; first, our grading system. From the time we started as children in the educational institution, classrooms have been too large and instructors too few to know the individual learning capacity of each student; thus we are graded comparatively against one another. If, while under the influence of parental authority (either by monetary rewards or restrictive discipline, etc.), one could not make the expected grade by morally-acceptable means, many morally-unacceptable means became enticing alternatives. Hopefully by the time we have reached seminary, we have established some moral standards with which we can act upon. However, there has been few changes in our grading system--1000 uniquely diverse students with uniquely diverse learning capacities are still being compared by the same standard. Even the comparison of two students would have a similar end--to "make the grade". If one of the possible results from "making the grade" is that a student has increased his/her education then that becomes a bonus. However, increased knowledge is only one of the many possible results; others I will discuss later.

Secondly, in many of our ministries within churches and parachurch organizations, how do we choose our leaders? In many youth groups, we have popularity contests and encourage the kids to compete just as they do in their secular activities. Or with our adults, many times we select them for their success in the business world (how well they have already competed and have "made it"). The Scriptures are completely ignored in many cases where we are told to choose leaders on their faithfulness (Exodus 18:21; II Timothy 2:2).

Lastly, Fuller's intramural sports are set up with the end result to WIN- If "winning" is our motivation, then there is no limit to the means of obtaining that goal (the means being rather obvious as we have previously encountered the competitive spirit in secular sport events). What purpose could a championship playoff game serve other than to inflate one's self-image? If we need the "win" mentality for incentive to play the best game we can, perhaps we should re-evaluate our motivational sources as Christians for all areas of our lifestyle.

If God's character is our absolute, then certainly the attitudes and actions of our Lord would grant us insight in this matter. He did not need to compete with Satan for all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them when Satan offered them to Him (Matthew 4:8-10). Jesus knew who He was in relationship with the Father and was secure in that relationship. On occasion, Jesus' disciples felt insecure enough to argue about which of them was the greatest (Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37); or felt in competition with someone outside of their
group casting out demons in Jesus' name (Luke 9:49-50). Jesus never condoned this competitive spirit.

Certainly a grading system, the selection of leaders, and intra-mural sports all in our religious institutions are not intrinsically wrong—they all can have a very valuable contribution in our own personal lives and our relationships with others. However, when the competitive spirit becomes our main incentive, we begin to lose sight of God, thus our direction; our activities become self-centered; we begin to see others not as persons created in God's image, but rather objects to manipulate for self-gain or obstacles to overcome. We then defeat our original purpose of winning, because in actuality, we are losing more than we ever started out to win.

This competitive spirit infects all levels of our lives as it is culturally engrained in us. We judge our high governmental officials by standards we set up, but cannot keep on our own personal level. As much as we Christians affirm that we do not profess Darwin's "survival of the fittest", we function on that level when involved competitively; and it is always at the expense of someone else.

My intention is not to condemn anyone or any group personally as we are all living with our "fallen Nature". However, my intention is to suggest that we have accepted the traditional competitive spirit of our American system as our main source of motivation with little question or thought, and have integrated it into our religious institutions. Are we as Christians fitting Holy Scripture into our already established cultural attitudes, or are we deriving our attitudes from Holy Scripture?

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AN OPEN LETTER ON SOCIAL CONCERN
Jim Hassmer - Home Mission Co-Ordinator

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

Lots of new names and faces, beautiful new(for some) scenery, new ideas to consider from classes and readings, church body-life participation to begin or continue, new joys and new frustrations, new challenges -- of such things is this new school year at Fuller made! A unique combination of 3 schools -- Theology, Psychology, and World Missions; a unique variety of Christian brothers and sisters from many different national, denominational, and personal backgrounds; a unique family of gifted professors and staff -- dare we take a moment off from Greek, Hebrew, or Systematic Theology to taste and see how good the Lord is being to us?

How shall we respond to these present and potential blessings of the Holy One in our midst? Take them for granted? Perhaps. Fixate on the growing pains rather than the growing? We might. "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? He has shown you, 0 man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mal. 6:6,8)
I've been given the opportunity to serve the Lord, and people in the Pasadena area whom He loves, including you, my brothers and sisters, in the role of Home Missions Coordinator for the Fuller community. In this position under Student Council I'll be seeking to mix business with pleasure, personal study with social service ministry, for myself and for you all -- in response to God's blessings and God's call.

"Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me...As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren you did it to me..." (Mt. 25:31-46)

"Enough of rhetorical questions, general statements, Scripture proof-tests (?) -- give us some specifics!" demand the people. Specifics: needs of the people surrounding you and me -- blacks, whites, Hispanics; elderly and children; alcoholics and addicts the imprisoned; the ill-fed and ill-housed; the sick and bored. Not just national statistics but rather local flesh-and-blood people, with names and faces and unique life stories, within walking or biking distance of our seminary and homes. Specifics: resources you and I have to hoard or to share with those in need around us -- an hour or two a week, a mind and a heart being made whole by Jesus, and the Lord of Life himself. My brothers and sisters, I DARE you to ask me for more specifics -- I'll be around.

In Jesus,

Jim Hassmer, Fuller Box 669

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LOOKING AHEAD
Ann Johnson, Co-ordinator of Women Students Activities

To begin you may say "why women students?" I have asked that question too! But a lot of controversy about the role and place of women remains. Women still experience discrimination and lack awareness of the issues. These are some of the reasons for this office.

When I look ahead, my hope is that students (women and men) will grow toward maturity. I covet for us as individuals the ability to have our priorities in order (or parallel, as is often the case). High on the list I see the individual person. I hope we will not lose ourselves, but that we will find time (or take time) to be, to hope, to relax, to enjoy. For those of us who are married, our spouses, and children, will also be high on the list of parallels. For me personally this is a heavy thing to wrestle with and often has to be reviewed. I hope that we will feel good about ourselves, glad that we are man or woman and enjoy being at Fuller even if we don't know "why" or "what" we are training for at this time.

I hope we will be prepared to examine a variety of opinions on different subjects, especially the "women issue". I am pleased with what Fuller has done so far to support and encourage women.
I hope this year that Fuller will continue to explore the theological, psychological, and cultural implications of women in church and society, address these issues and support its women.

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WOMEN'S INSTITUTE - AN OPPORTUNITY
Win Griffin

The focus of Women's Institute has been shared with the Fuller Community in several ways via letters to new students, registration packet information, introductions during orientation, and the blue brochure with the year's program spelled out in it. I am glad for this opportunity to express a personal word about Women's Institute.

Let's look at the time each of us has at Fuller. The scene has a distinct distortion if we think only in terms of its benefit for our husbands. That is a fact. They are here for preparation and training. And, so are we women. I have known several women who left this institution after their husbands graduation with real fear and insecurity because they had not understood the importance of growing along with him. Often this is misconstrued in thinking that the wife must take Greek with her husband. Some can do that. But most of us need nurturing in academia at some practical levels along with other women who may or may not have college degrees; who are newly or "oldly" married; who do or don't have children; who are frightened, and hopeful: who are women.

My firm belief is that God does not place us in static, sterile environments with no capacity to change the situations and ourselves. The time we spend at Fuller can be rich; rich in risking new things, rich in discovering the depth of our capabilities, and rich in learning experiences. I am not suggesting that all wives should, must or ought to take WI classes. However, I am asking that each wife consider the benefits of involvement - in first Thursday gab sessions, in workshops each month, and/or in the classes which are designed specifically for women's needs.

Speaking of workshops, the first one in October was an extraordinary two and a half hours during which our panel alerted us to aspects of being Black, Hispanic and Caucasian. We hared our Lord, our womanhood, and our need to understand more clearly each others cultures. In such an atmosphere the sparks of fellowship were kindled, and I still feel warmed by the conversations and new awarenesses resultant from that time.

I am writing as a wife, learning as I go, and as a person who needs interaction with other people to keep me from getting stagnate. I am grateful for the opportunities this institution has afforded me.

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Dear Sisters and Brothers of the Fuller Community:

I am a white, middle class, 24 year old, first year seminary student. You may accordingly then, want to add several grains of salt to what follows here. I am concerned with the state and shape of Christian radicalism at Fuller in the year and years to come. I worry about the form and content of our radicalism because radicalism is too easily come by. Intelligent discerning biblical radicalism is much more difficult to discover and even more so, to practice.

But the more immediate question is why radicalism at all? Because attaching the word radical to almost anything has been in vogue for the last ten years. Because calling ourselves radical will somehow align us with the hearts and motivations of the New Left? No. Obviously no. There is in fact nothing in reality or even in romantic images that should call us innately and unquestionably toward radicalism. And every bone in my white middle class evangelical body affirms that with a mighty sigh of relief. I think we labor in vain if we try to make a virtue out of radicalism just because it is radical in relation to something else. But, having said that I can't tell you how often my complacent passive little self has been pushed up against a wall by this book called "The Bible". It tells about this being called God and this guy named Jesus who together have blown my unradicalism right out of the water. It is the first one's character and the second one's life that have collectively pushed me toward radicalism. Not just radicalism, or radicalism in a vacuum, but radicalism in the context of the world in which I find myself. I'll tell you honestly, it is Christ, not my inborn convictions that have led me to this point. I didn't become a Christian because I am a radical. I am becoming radicalized in context of this world because I am a Christian.

But what I'd like to discuss here is not the pros and cons or degrees of prudent Christian radicalism. What prompted me to write this article is my experience and observation of the things we do to assert our radicalism to a watching world. There are a number of them which, though often well motivated, are insufficient in themselves for the purpose of communicating the depth and meaning of a Christian stance in an unchristian world.

First on the list are clothes. If we think that by darning a pair of overalls and a workshirt, we are saying something clearly about our anti-materialistic values we're wrong. Sears ruined that avenue for radicals. As soon as the shock wore off, overalls became a popular modified style. School kids and movie stars wear the radical clothing of the 60's to be "in". (the fancier models have diamond studs) I remember Denny Rydbery saying he had contemplated adopting the radical style of clothes until he found out how much it was gonna cost to show the world he was rejecting crass materialism. As soon as radical became "chic" it lost it's significance as a statement of values. It's not that clothes don't say anything, but that they don't say enough.
The same I think is true of men or women wearing long or short hair and not shaving. You might mean it to say - "I disassociate myself from an uptight conservativism that would assess the worth of an individual by his neat and well barbered look - but to anyone else you might only be trying to look "in". (i.e. looking radical for reasons of peer pressure). I remember reading that John Lennon said he was sick of being approached by longhairs and assumed that their long hair somehow made them automatically socially aware and politically astute. I'm not making a case for or against long hair and beards. I am saying if that is where your radicalism begins and ends you never even got started.

Another way to become remarkably unradical is to salt and pepper your language with a few "hells" and "damns". If that is our sign of gutsy realness I'm afraid I've heard sixth graders who have out-nitty-grittied us. I've heard guys use certain 4-letter words and then glance quickly at me to see if I don't think they're the most radical Christians to ever hit the Fuller Campus.

What I'm saying is I think, obvious. If "kingdom" ethics and the model of Christ pushed us toward a stance that ascribes to a radically different value system and lifeview than that of the world, then that radicalism must have a more authentic outworking than one that merely stops with an image of radicalism. I've been with people at restaurants who spoke nobly and strongly against the value systems of this world and then dehumanized their waitress. If our radicalism isn't happening at a hamburger joint then it's not happening at all. Os Guinness has said, "In every instance the Christian must not only be heard to say that man is made in the image of God, he must be seen to practice this truth". I am simply saying, we must continually ask ourselves, first, from whom are we taking our cues (i.e. our directives for lifestyle) and second, to what extent do we act upon (flesh out) those radically different positions? We cannot afford the ease of loving selectively. We cannot make gods of certain material possessions. We dare not make arbitrary the commitment to treat all people with equal dignity and respect as fully human beings.

Christ brought forth a new humanity. He was the visible presence of the kingdom of God. And in the name of that same God we can commit ourselves to no less than being a demonstration of that new humanity-anticipating the fulfillment of that kingdom. Even with our failures, that would be radical.

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