The Semi (02-17-1997)

Fuller Theological Seminary
Adoption and God’s Healing Love
An Interview with Paul Conditt

How did you end up getting interested in doing research on adoption?

I am adopted, as are both my brother & sister, so I’ve had an experiential interest in it my entire life. When I came to Fuller I took a class on transformation from James Loder, and I ran across a book that dealt with adoption. I started looking at God’s healing as a way to address adoption issues; that led to my integration focus.

What are some of the primary issues facing those who’ve been adopted?

Right now I’m looking at adults; the primary and unique issues we face relate to self-esteem and identity. There’s some research now that looks at attachment: what kind of relationships adult adoptees have. Depression, anxiety and those kinds of things often accompany being adopted as well.

How much are those factors influenced by the kind of family into which you’re adopted?

Everybody’s different, so you can’t say ‘all adoptees are this way’ or ‘all adoptive families are this way,’ but I’d say there’s a strong influence. Some of the things I’m looking at are: the age at which people were adopted, the order (were they the oldest child, middle child, etc.); all those things continue to affect adoptees, just like they would anybody else. But the unique aspects are that an adoptee’s history often goes back to the day they were born, but not before. If there is any information from before birth, then it’s real sketchy. These things make identity formation more difficult.

Does that kind of reunion usually come about because the children seek out the birth parents, and not the other way around?

Usually—more often than not. That’s actually a big issue right now, the issue of closed versus open records. I am not able to find my birth parents, because I was born in Colorado, which has closed records. The only two states that do have open records are Kansas and, I believe, Alaska.

I thought there was an increasing openness?

There is in the public sector, but not in the legal sector. The laws are actually not being changed, so it can be very difficult. And sometimes it’s a life-and-death situation, if adoptees don’t know anything about some kind of inherited disease. That’s not common, but it does happen because, as I said, most adoptees have no history before their birth. So it’s very difficult to find out. And one of the most salient questions that nearly all adoptees ask is, ‘why?’ And ‘was there something wrong with me that caused me to be given up?’ I think that’s why a lot of the reunions are positive experiences, because adoptees can talk with the birth mother. They can gain some empathy for her experience, and see that ‘It wasn’t your fault. It wasn’t because you cried too much, or because you were deformed somehow, or something like that. It’s just that I was sixteen years old, and my parents made me give you up’ or there was no support.

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CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY GRADUATE STUDIES SCHOLARSHIP

This scholarship, in the amount of $3,000 plus full tuition, is provided for a graduate of a seminary other than Calvin for one year of full-time study with a view toward securing the Th.M. degree. Students who qualify for admission as candidates for the Th.M. degree are invited to apply. The award will be made on the basis of academic record, character, and promise of growth.

Applications are available in the Office of Financial Aid and are due March 1, 1997.

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL OF LOS ANGELES FELLOWSHIP

An award will be made in the amount of $3000 to a female U.S. citizen who is a resident of the state of California, based on financial need, community service performed, outstanding academic achievement, letters of recommendation, and a personal interview. A B.A. degree is required, and preference will be given to relatively young women completing their graduate education rather than to those making career changes.

Application deadline: March 1, 1997. Applications are available in the Office of Financial Aid. Check out the bulletin board for more information.

JEMS - JAPANESE EVANGELICAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Eligibility: Seminarians preparing for full-time Christian vocational ministry who are members of or serving in a Japanese American (Nikkei) church. Applicants must possess a B.A. degree or its equivalent, and preference is given to applicants who come from or serve in a Nikkei church in Southern California. Scholarships are granted on the basis of scholastic standing, need, promise, and Christian maturity. Awards: $300.

Applications are available in the Office of Financial Aid and are due to JEMS by Friday, March 29, 1997.

GEORGIA HARKNESS SCHOLARSHIP

Eligibility: United Methodist women 35 and older who are already candidates certified (as of 6/96) by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry.

Applications are available in the Office of Financial Aid. Deadline is March 1, 1997.

BIBLICAL WITNESS FELLOWSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS

Wanted: Leaders with a call to renewal to serve in the congregations in the UCC.

Eligibility: Strong personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives, exercise of personal holiness, belief that the Bible is true, ability to work well within the reformed/congregational tradition and ethos.

Scholarships of approximately $500 per semester are available to students who reflect such a commitment and can affirm the Dubuque Declaration, our movement’s contemporary restatement of faith.

For more information or a scholarship application, contact: Biblical Witness Fellowship, P.O. Box 102, Candia, N.H. 03034, (800) 494-9172, areformer@AOL.com, http://www.goshen.net/BWF

THE SANTA BARBARA FOUNDATION

Through the Jake Gimbel Loan Fund, approximately 10 interest-free, 10-year maturity loans of varying amounts are available for the 97-98 academic year. Eligible applicants must have attended schools in Santa Barbara county from the 7th through 12th grades, must have graduated from a Santa Barbara County secondary school, and must be enrolled full-time during the 97-98 year. Those who did not attend school in Santa Barbara County but demonstrate exceptionally strong ties to the county may, as an exception, be considered.

I went to see the film The Color of Fear with anticipation. A friend had told me it would be worth my time. Perhaps it was. It certainly stirred my emotions. But not in the manner I expected.

Having begun the viewing with great empathy towards the participants, I soon found the anger and grief in the film absolutely overwhelming, contagious, and, ultimately, contaminating. I detest “person-bashing” of any sort, and at the end of the film left feeling that I had been a voyeur to something ugly. It reminded me of an incident I once witnessed in Africa.

A man, having been caught stealing a piece of cloth in the market, was attacked by the crowd. They set out to beat him to death, and used whatever instrument was at hand. Whenever the thief would lose consciousness, someone would throw a pail of water on him and revive him, only to haul him to his feet and begin again. His pleas went unheeded, and his life was spared only by the arrival of the police. Yes, he was guilty; yes, he needed to be shown “the error of his ways.” But no one deserves that kind of treatment.

Perhaps one reason I found The Color of Fear so disturbing is that it portrays an America I don’t know, and one I refuse to believe my homeland has become. As with each of us, my perspective on racism has been shaped by my heritage and personal experiences.

My desperately poor Swedish grandparents crossed the Atlantic in the hold of a ship tightly packed with countless other immigrants who believed that the welcome inscribed on the base of Lady Liberty was for them. They, along with thousands of other Scandinavians, Slovaks, and Germans, settled in Minnesota. They continued to worship and conduct everyday affairs in their native language, but were proud to call themselves Americans, and taught their children that America is the great “melting pot” where all are welcome, all are equal, and all are free. As their descendants, having never experienced racism nor witnessed it, my cousins and I ventured forth to serve the Lord around the world, and to discover God-given marriage partners from China, Venezuela, and Mexico. Our family reunions are a sheer delight, a multi-ethnic mix that is a little taste of heaven.

Nevertheless, it is folly to ignore the obvious. Racism exists in America, just as it exists in one form or another in virtually every country of the world. It is an ugly, vile, murderous cancer on humanity.

But as I consider the responses to this film, I am surprised and concerned by the lack of focus on what seems so obviously to be the core issue. This award-winning film addresses a very real problem from the only hopeful perspective available to the secular humanist. But as those called to be God’s messengers of reconciliation in a world of anger and pain, surely we, as Christians, must view this from a different perspective. We must demonstrate spiritual discernment in these matters of the soul. Racism is not a white problem, it is not an American problem; it is the most ancient of all human problems. Racism is a sin problem! It can never be eliminated through dialogue or the exercise of human virtues, no matter how well-intentioned. The only cure for racism is the radical change of heart which takes place through the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Anything less is treating the malaria while permitting the mosquitoes to thrive!

The Dogon and Fulani of Mali, West Africa, have been bitter enemies for centuries. The Fulani despise the Dogon as a people they once enslaved, and as the ancient oppressors, the Fulani are considered below the ranks of humanity (non-persons) by the Dogon. Although they live side by side, and in many ways have a symbiotic relationship, animosity easily overflows into violence and murder.

Several years ago, a number of young Dogon pastors felt called to evangelize the Fulani. As they faithfully ministered to their enemies, one by one, there began to be conversions to Christ from among this strongly Muslim people. Every Fulani Christian in the area of Mali in which I live has been led to the Lord by a Dogon believer! Racial hatred of a depth that is incomprehensible to most of us has bowed the knee at the cross of Jesus Christ. That is the only place racism can be effectively dealt with—at the cross.
How often is there some sort of note or documentation left about why the parent did it?

It's starting to happen more and more. I've seen a lot of girls (and I say 'girls' because it's usually teenagers who give up their children) write letters for their children to look at when they turn eighteen, or whenever. That's becoming more common, I think. But for people who are my age, twenty-five and up, it's not very common. Birthparents at that time were told to have the child, give it away, and then forget about it: go on with their lives. Adoptive parents were told to 'treat this child just as if you bore him or her yourself.'

Do you think people now who give up babies for adoption are doing it for more reasons?

In an article in the L.A. Times the other day, (California Governor) Pete Wilson was basically saying that women who could not afford their children should give them up for adoption, because it would cost the state less money. There is an economic reason for that, but I don't think we need to be relying on purely economic reasons. There are a lot of people doing the 'baby-brokerage' thing, and that's disturbing to me; it doesn't seem right. But I think a lot of people are relinquishing their children...
With that, we could heal some of the shame that Church traditionally holds up as holy institutions. It was carried out through level equal with marriage and family, things the people, but history tells us that it could by Joseph. I don't want to say that God's plan was carried out more hurtful to them. But obviously the adoptive experience we have with God can be (and I think God intends it to be) a healing and redeeming experience for those who were adopted by earthly parents as well as those who were not. The same kinds of issues that happen in adoptive families happen in biological families as well.

Adoption creates an atmosphere that can be secretive. A lot of adoptions occur even within families, and that can be a big secret. If someone's aunt got pregnant out of wedlock and somebody else took the child, only a few people would know, the aunt and the adoptive parents and the grandparents, and they'd try to keep it that way. There can actually be some good reasons for that, but the whole secrecy thing can be damaging as well. People aren't necessarily secretive about it; some are starting to say, 'We're having a baby,' and to have the same kind of celebration they would have if they bore the child, only a few people would know, the aunt and the adoptive parents and the grandparents, and they'd try to keep it that way. But that's a new development, as well. So shame is a significant aspect to it, and that can pervade your life in a lot of ways.

I believe adoptees actually have an experience that non-adoptees don't have of the way God adopts everybody. I look at some of the biblical stories, such as Moses and Esther, and you could even say Jesus was adopted, at least by Joseph. I don't want to say that God's plan could not have been carried out without adoptive people, but history tells us that it wasn't carried out without them. It was carried out through people who were adopted. So I think part of what we can do as a church is to raise adoption to a level equal with marriage and family, things the Church traditionally holds up as holy institutions. I think adoption definitely fits into that category. With that, we could heal some of the shame that goes along with it.

You're facilitating an adoption group right now?

That’s right. We’re looking at some of these issues I’ve already mentioned: self-esteem, identity, search-and-reunion. We’re also going to look at some of the directly spiritual aspects. We’ll look at this model that God has given us, that we are all adopted as God’s children. For some adoptees, I think that will be a very healing reframing of their experience.

What do you do say to a person who’s had a bad experience with adoption? Do you say God is redeeming that bad experience, or showing us what a good adoption should be?

I think that would be the kind of approach I would want to take. Obviously, that varies from individual to individual, and you don’t want to prescribe something onto somebody else’s experience that isn’t going to work; it may end up being more hurtful to them. But obviously the adoptive experience we have with God can be (and I think God intends it to be) a healing and redeeming experience for those who were adopted by earthly parents as well as those who were not. The same kinds of issues that happen in adoptive families happen in biological families as well.

Are there special ways with which psychological professionals address adoption?

There’s not a whole lot being done: at least, not by psychologists. Social workers are doing a lot of work, because they can also handle all the governmental-agency stuff. Psychologists are starting to address the identity issue. The research shows that adoptees are overrepresented among mental health clients. About two to three percent of the population is adopted in the United States, but a little over ten percent of the clinical population (those who are seeking or receiving treatment) is made up of adoptees. That goes all the way from childhood through adulthood.

Being adopted does not cause problems, but there does seem to be some evidence that more adoptees than non-adoptees deal with issues of self-esteem and identity. Feelings of rejection and abandonment tie into that. So therapists tend to address those types of issues. Helping someone to grieve something that happened pre-verbally can be very difficult.

How has this research helped you in your own process?

It’s had a variety of effects on me. My own search process has been very frustrating, because there are a lot of roadblocks along the way. But going through some of this stuff and looking at it very directly, both from a professional vantage point and also from my own personal experience, has been a good experience overall. It’s helped me to look at some of these issues for myself, and I can draw on my personal experience to help other adoptees. I think somebody who doesn’t have that kind of experience couldn’t do it the same way.

How has your coursework added to your research: have you found it useful?

Yes: especially some of my theology coursework. It’s given me tools to really dive into Paul’s letters, especially. There’s VERY strong adoption language in them. In a couple of my New Testament classes, I’ve been able to write papers focusing on that. I can look at those passages more in depth than I would have been able to without those exegetical tools. And of course the developmental psychology material has been very helpful.

What do you hope to do long-term? Counseling? Research?

I’d like to do some of both. I envision working with adoptees very directly at the beginning of my practice, but I also want to branch out into working with adoptive parents and birth parents, and working with churches as well. I think I could have a lot to offer, helping to train adoptive parents. I could give seminars and say, ‘these are the kinds of things adoptees will probably deal with’ and do some parent training with that. I’d also like to do counseling with birth parents giving children up. It’s really easy to point the finger at them and say, ‘Well, you shouldn’t have gotten pregnant; you should have been more responsible,’ forgetting that it tends to be an awful experience. For people who choose not to have abortions, if they can’t care for the child, that’s their only option. Another thing I think is part of my call is that, if the Church is going to take stands against abortion, which a lot of the churches do, then we need to be part of the solution. This can be a very powerful part of the solution.

Paul had a paper, “Healing the Primordial Wound,” published last fall in The Adoption Therapist. It’s a secular journal, so unfortunately he had to remove a lot of the spiritual material. He has worked on another paper with Bob Jackson on the shame aspects of adoption, and they will try to publish that paper soon.

If you are interested in joining an adoption group, please contact Beth at Fuller Psychological and Family Services, (818)584-5555.
School of Theology
Registration Week for spring quarter is February 25-28. SOT Academic Advising is now taking appointments for returning students for these dates:

Last names beginning with:
- A-L: February 10-14
- M-Z: February 18-21

The advisors will be operating on 15-minute appointments so we encourage you to pick up your class request card early and have it ready to sign at your appointment. If you cannot meet with your advisor in person, you may set up a phone-in appointment by calling (818) 584-5425, or through e-mail: advising@vax.fuller.edu.

The SOT ECD’s (Expanded Course Descriptions) for Spring 1997 can now be accessed in the convenience of your home or office through the Internet!! They are located at http://www.fuller.edu/sot/ecds on the Fuller Home Page. ECD’s will still be on display in the library. They can also be viewed and downloaded from the PC computer terminals in the library which have Internet access.

Please Note the Following SOT Course Changes for the Spring Quarter!

Additions:
- OT 526 Psalms Cole R 4 Units TuTh 3:00-4:50 p.m. Prereq.: LG502 OTCE
- OT 516 Jeremiah Butler J 4 Units MW 7:00-8:50 p.m. Prereq.: LG502 OTBE
- GM588 Christian Witness in Public Policy Colletti J/Cole R. This class will meet at the Villa Parke Community Center in Pasadena from 6-9 p.m. on Wednesday evenings (April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and May 21) and for two weekend urban immersion experiences May 9-10 and 16-17, Friday evenings 6-9 p.m. and Saturdays 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Deletions
- NS 578 Paul and Judaism
- OT 502 Los Profetas
- CF 566 Ministry with Single Adults

Corrections/Modifications (Corrected information is in bold type.)
- LG 502B Beginning Hebrew Beetle M R
- LG 561 French II March 27, April 4, 11, 18 and 25 8:00 a.m.-12 noon.
- OT 588 Old Testament Critical Approaches Prerequisite: OT core and WPI
- ST 530/830 Karl Barth and Evangelism TuTh 8:00-9:50 a.m. Masters-level students will meet twice weekly.
- GM 505 Foundations for Ministry 3
- Redman RR.

The following SWM courses are also now open to SOT students:
- MN 550 Urban Religious Movements
- MN 571 Organization/Ministry Development
- MN 575 Urban Practicum: Spirituality/Leadership 3

Community Art Show
The Pasadena Presbyterian Church will hold its 23rd Annual Community Art Show from March 8 to March 23.

Competition is open to all Southern California artists. Entry forms for the juried exhibit can be obtained by contacting the church office at 54 N. Oakland Avenue in Pasadena or by calling (818) 793-2191. All work must be original. No sculpture or photography.

The entry fee is $10 for each submission with a maximum of three entries. Paintings must be delivered by March 1st or 2nd. An awards ceremony will be held at the church at 3 p.m. on March 8th to open the show, with a reception following. Artists’ work will be shown Monday through Saturday, 12 to 5 p.m., and Sunday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the church, located at the corner of Colorado and Madison.

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Lenten Devotional Book is Here!!! If you want a Lenten Devotional book, the Office of Christian Community will be distributing them this week during Wednesday and Thursday Chapel services. We would love for the Fuller campus to join together in reading these devotions during the Lenten season. If you don’t have a chance to pick one up at Chapel, we will have extras at the Office of Christian Community.

CAMPUS EVENTS

Low-Fee Individual Therapy
Offered by the School of Psychology, beginning March, 1997. This psychotherapy is appropriate for those experiencing anxiety, depression, relationship difficulty, life-changing adjustments and personal growth. Ten sessions provided for $50.00. Therapists are students enrolled in Ph.D. or Psy.D. programs in Clinical Psychology. For further information, call (818)584-5555.

Ministry Enrichment Seminar
Tuesday, 2/18 @ 11:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
Dr. Steve Marsh and Ms. Lynn Minick will present “The Wedding and the Pastor’s Role” on Tuesday, February 18, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Pilgrim Chapel of the First Congregational Church, 464 E. Walnut. A pastor and a wedding hostess will talk you through a mock wedding. Learn how to lead, theologize, counsel and conduct a wedding.

The Truth is out There!
Friday, 2/21 @ 7 p.m.
Don’t miss the Fuller Follies, an exciting Fuller tradition, Friday, February 21 at 7 p.m. in Travis Auditorium! Let’s take a study break and come to laugh at ourselves and at mysterious and exciting details of life at Fuller! Do you want to believe? If you have questions, call Laura Partridge in the ASC Office at (818)584-5452. Rumor has it that Jim McClendon will make another appearance! Dr. Scholer and Dr. Hagner are also slated to participate.

SOT Professorial Inaugural Lecture
Tuesday, 2/25 @ 10–10:40 a.m.
You are cordially invited to a School of Theology Professorial Inaugural Lecture presented by:

David M. Scholer, Th.D.
Professor of New Testament
“Galatians 3:28 and the Ministry of Women in the Church”
Travis Auditorium

Ministry Enrichment Seminar
Tuesday, 2/25 @ 3–4 p.m.
The Rev. Jeff Gaines, Executive Director of Spiritual Directors International, will discuss “The Unique Ministry of Spiritual Direction” on Tuesday, February 25, from 3–4 p.m. in Psych. 120. Rev. Gaines will talk about “What is spiritual direction? How does it differ from pastoral care? Can just anyone do it?” He will share from over ten years of direction experience.

Ministry Enrichment Seminar
Wednesday, 2/26 @ 3–4:30 p.m.
Many times pastors are caught between “official church teaching” and their own experience or conviction. On Wednesday, February 26, Dr. Marlene Cohen will speak on “Our Brilliant Veneer: Closing the Gap Between Pastoral Practice and Belief” in the Geneva Room, second floor, Payton Hall, from 3–4:30 p.m., Dr. Cohen is a Christian counselor and author, as well as a lecturer on the integration of psychology with theology.

SOT Brown Bag Lunch
Thursday, 2/27 noon–1 p.m.
If you want to meet Father Sam Gantt without taking his 12-unit intensive Greek class, then here’s your chance! He will be speaking at the SOT Brown Bag Lunch on February 27 from noon to 1 p.m. in the Faculty Commons. Refreshments will be provided.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Seminars in Your Backyard!!! Special Student Rates
The Lowell E. Berry Institute for Continuing Education in Ministry offers a range of seminars in all areas of ministry. We feature the best speakers in the nation. For more information, call (818)584-5339, or visit us at 490 E. Walnut, across from the SOP building. Our upcoming seminars are:
Friday, 2/21 – Renewing Your Call and Revitalizing Your Ministry, with our own Dr. Eddie Gibbs.
Saturday, 3/22 – How to Do Small Groups, sponsored by Pilgrimage/Nav Press, with Dr. Richard Peace and Thom Corrigan.
3/13-14 Small Groups conference with Dr. Gareth Icenogle and Rev. David Stark. (Seattle, WA)
4/5 Bringing the Church Home workshop with Julia Banks, Dr. Robert Banks, and Jonathan Campbell. (Walnut Creek, CA)

C.S. Lewis Society
Wednesday, 2/19 @ 7:30 p.m.
The Southern California C.S. Lewis Society meets on the third Wednesday of each month (excluding the summer months) at 7:30 p.m. in the Faculty Commons. Join us on February 19 as we hear Father Gary London speak on C.S. Lewis: My Faith Journey.

Apartment Hunting?
Various one-bedroom apartments are available for Fuller students. Prices range from $495 to $625/month. Call Housing Services at (818)584-5445 for more information.

Special Offer
Automobile Club of Southern California (AAA) is giving anyone associated with Fuller a discount on AAA membership. The usual $60 fee has been dropped to $50. This is for new members only; no renewals. AAA will help you register your car; will provide maps, TourBooks and Triptiks; and can help you save money all around town. If you are interested in AAA membership, come by the Office of Student Services, the International Student Services Office, or Human Resources to pick up an application.

The Children’s Kingdom
The Children’s Kingdom Daycare at 289 N. Madison Ave. (1/2 block from Fuller) has current openings for newborns to 10-year-olds. Registration for next quarter, when all times from 7:45 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. are available, begins February 24. Stop by or call (818)793-3700, Carol Emery, Director.

Due to a family emergency, the Rev. Gardner Taylor will be unable to come to Fuller on February 19 and 20 to preach the Amadeus Sermons, as the SEMI previously reported he would do. If he reschedules, we will tell you as soon as we know.

Doug Gregg will speak in the Thursday All Seminary Chapel service on February 20. Please consult the signs placed around campus for the February 19 chapel speaker.
This section of the SEMI is for the announcement of events or services not directly offered by a Fuller office or organization. For information about rates, contact the SEMI at (818)584-5430. Note: Each person is responsible for checking on the quality and type of service before contracting or using it. The SEMI and Office of Student Services do not personally recommend or guarantee any of the services listed.

**FOR RENT**

Vacation Get-Away at the Harmony House. 4-bedroom retreat center (sleeps 10-12) in beautiful Lake Arrowhead. $295/weekends, $650/week. Call Dr. Janet Harms (909)244-6303 (Fuller choir director) for brochure and reservations.

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Support Group: Ongoing group for female survivors of sexual abuse. Meets Thursday evenings in Pasadena. $20 per week. Must have prior counseling or group experience. For information, call Julie Roberts Sanders at (818)449-2526 ext. 25.

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