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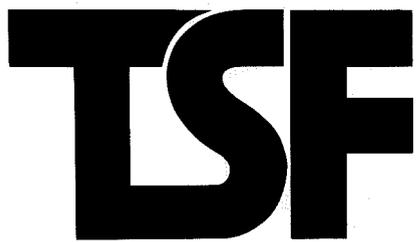
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Editor: Mark Lau Branson
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situation appears when economics are discussed. The right (capitalism) and the left (socialism) are at their cores both materialistic. Weber calls for an evangelical "centrist" position that continues to be a prophetic voice and model in the world. The seminaries could provide a context for developing such new approaches if they would resist taking refuge in their party-line positions.

Professors trapped by all styles of fundamentalism fail to encourage students to seek understanding of other viewpoints. This is especially evident, for example, in bibliographic bigotry. Scholars on the left, limited by prejudice or stunted learning, omit evangelical scholars like F. F. Bruce, I. Howard Marshall, George Ladd, Leonhard Goppelt, Dale Moody, Helmut Thielicke, Donald Bloesch, Gabriel Fackre, Dewey Beegle, William LaSor and many others. Even moderates like Pannenberg, Bright, Childs, R. Brown, Dunn, and Wainwright too easily get dismissed. The reading assignments of professors on the right are usually broader, but too often the only purpose of excursions into Bultmann, Tillich, Cobb or Fohrer is to prepare an assault. Instead, honest, clean critiques are needed. Students could benefit greatly if professors would discuss their views openly with colleagues or neighboring professors. They would benefit even more if those professors would show their own ability to learn, change, and appreciate the viewpoints of others.

Perhaps professors face a failure of nerve. There is a certain vulnerability required in opening oneself and one's students to serious study of other viewpoints. Too many educators on the left work with hidden agendas, chipping away toward a goal rather than openly "professing" an opinion and then seeking truth within the accountability of Christian community. It is far easier to say, "Most scholars agree . . ." than to admit, "I currently believe this, and have the support of several other scholars. I have worked hard. However, these other writers express different opinions, so our discussions can move us further now into the issues." Some professors work at creating anxiety, even humiliation as they chisel away at a student's tradition. This fairly violent form of education witnesses to an unbiblical view of humanness and a lack of respect for the individual's integrity. Little learning can take place; defensiveness is forced and pervades not only the student's countenance but the professor's as well. Furthermore, the seminarian hardly has here an appropriate model for further pastoral work.

Is there an alternative to such fundamentalistic approaches? Yes! And Christians should be the first to discover them. Martin Marty, in *The Public Church: Mainline—Evangelical—Catholic*, claims that the well-known standoffs have been overcome in some quarters. We can see a convergence of several groups which witnesses to common elements in both the inner life of the church and in the ways it faces the public sphere with a unique message and ministry. I also see such possibilities at seminaries and hope for the benefits of realigned priorities and reformulated content.

Education needs to be done within the context of such community as is represented by Marty's "public church." Such community in the seminaries will have all the strengths of accountability, faithful submission to Scripture, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the call of the Lord for the church to serve the world in the name of Jesus; and it will also have all the weaknesses of human frailty, limited vision, selfish agendas and pride. Henri Nouwen, in *Creative Ministry*, provides a model: "redemptive teaching." It is dialogical and prayerful. It calls for clear, open scholarship.

Seminary students and professors should work to provide such "redemptive education." Bible study should be the primary source of truth, light and power. Scholarship is only a tool, to be used as we seek God and his salvation. Relationships are intended for love, not antagonism. Disagreements are a path toward learning, mutual submission and wisdom. The church must receive more than fundamentalism offers. Seminaries can provide more, by God's grace.

FOUNDATIONS

(Doing theology on the basics of classical faith)

HERMENEUTICS: A NEGLECTED AREA

By Clark H. Pinnock, Professor of Theology, McMaster Divinity College.

Conservatives have tended to imagine that once they have successfully defended the Bible as God's written Word the rest is easy. All you have to do is read and apply the text, is it not? Operating with this simple-minded approach, we have tended to sit out the debates raging around hermeneutics, figuring that they result from a low view of Scripture and are probably heretical. We did not suppose that we might have a problem here. So like ostriches we stuck our head in the sand and let Bultmann and Gadamer go on their merry way. Not that we were wrong to believe in the importance of recognising the Bible to be divinely authoritative as the first step in biblical interpretation—that is correct. Where we went wrong was in supposing that *applying* the Bible after you did your historical exegesis was a simple, straightforward matter. We did not reckon on the *second step* in hermeneutics being so problematic. We did not think enough about how the authority of the Bible works.

What has been waking us up out of our hermeneutical slumbers is a set of nitty gritty issues that dramtise the problem for us.

Both radicals and fundamentalists pick up the whole package—demons, atonement, miracles, recent creation—and either throw it out or try to stuff it down people's throats.

We have begun to ask such questions as these: do you always have to submit to authority? are there miracles today? can there be a just war? what about other religions? should women always wear veils in church? can people be demon-possessed? Questions like these force us to recognise that applying the Bible is not at all a simple matter. Getting solid answers to them is no easy business.

So hermeneutics is our problem too. It will no longer do to scoff at the liberals' solutions to this problem when we have no alternative to offer. At least they are trying! It will not do just to play it by ear and make all kinds of inconsistent moves and dump the problem in the lap of the church. After all, if anything we have a *larger* problem than others, in that our higher view of biblical infallibility compels us to bring more truths into the twentieth century to make sense of. Because of our concern to be faithful to the Bible, we deprive ourselves of the liberty and flexibility available to others. The challenge we have to face is this: what do we propose to do about the fact that twentieth-century people do not think the way scriptural writers think about many important topics? Whatever you think of Bultmann, you cannot deny that he faced up to a serious question here, and one which we dare not continue to sidestep.

In my opinion we do not get much help from left or right on this matter. Both the radicals and the fundamentalists are heavy handed. They both pick up the whole package—demons, atone-

INTERSECTION

(The integration of theological studies with ethics, academic disciplines, and ecclesiastical institutions)

EVANGELICALS FOR SOCIAL ACTION By Russ Williams, ESA Director of Communications.

Social issues confront us daily: poverty, hunger, discrimination, abortion. The list could go on. Should the church have anything to say about these things?

Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA) says YES. The church of tomorrow will have to learn to deal with these issues from a biblical viewpoint. Theological students, who are the church leaders of tomorrow, must come to grips with these challenges. The Bible demands justice. ESA seeks to work with the church in answering this prophetic call.

ESA is a non-profit national membership organization. It works to draw together individuals and local congregations, as well as students on Christian college and seminary campuses, who are committed to social justice. ESA sprang from the Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern, a statement by 40 church leaders in 1973. Since then, with Ronald Sider as president, ESA has become a nation-wide movement, promoting peace, liberty and justice.

At present, ESA has more than 3,500 members and friends across the country and 18 active local chapters. The numbers keep growing. ESA local groups work to educate congregations into a deeper understanding of evangelism and discipleship. The message remains the same: biblical Christianity must have a social as well as personal dimension.

In addition to establishing a national membership and a network of local chapters across the country, ESA has promoted a variety of projects. The Discipleship Workshops program has presented more than 50 workshops across the country at churches and colleges interested in social justice issues. Local ESA chapters have been involved in community economic development, racial reconciliation, work with the poor and hungry, summer camps for urban youth, efforts in peacemaking and other projects. ESA members have held study groups on matters such as women's issues, nuclear disarmament, world hunger, abortion, etc. In a word, the ESA family has been active in seeking the reconciliation of Jesus Christ in a fragmented society.

And now the work goes on. The national office continues to support existing chapters and build new ones in areas where ESA organization is weak or nonexistent. We plan to develop new workshops in the area of peacemaking and train local chapters to conduct them in their own regions. Using the theme "What Does It Mean To Be Pro-Life?" ESA is developing additional "Tracts for Justice," applying the pro-life position to the organization's basic concerns. ESA has plans to establish task forces that will vigorously research biblical responses to contemporary public policy issues. ESA also plans to host a series of regional social justice conferences. With the help of concerned Christians across the country, ESA can involve many more church persons in these projects in the coming years.

In terms of basic beliefs, ESA holds that the Scriptures are the basis for addressing social issues. In terms of these issues, the organization has taken the following stands:

- For peace and nuclear disarmament
- For the defense of the poor and powerless
- For protecting the lives of the unborn
- For ensuring the sacredness of the family

- For the elimination of racial and sex discrimination
- For human rights at home and abroad

An ESA member becomes part of a national movement to educate congregations about social issues. Members receive a bimonthly newsletter plus materials showing how to organize effectively for social action at a member's church, college or seminary. Educational materials are available for teaching others about biblical viewpoints on ESA's issues. ESA can provide a network to link persons and groups together to work for social justice. By joining ESA, the individual, church member or student, can share the pilgrimage of social justice with other like-minded Christians.

Al Saiz, a TSF member at Harvard Divinity School, is the coordinator for a new ESA chapter there. Saiz, along with other students, have heard evangelicals criticized because of an alleged lack of social consciousness. Saiz reports, "We hope to show students at Harvard that evangelicals do have sufficient biblical base to evolve a theology of social action. Social action does not necessarily equate with theological liberalism. Evangelicals can have much to say to the main stream of Christianity about the church's mandate to become involved in helping to solve society's many pressing problems."

The TSF chapters at Perkins School of Theology and at American Baptist Seminary of the West have also included mention in their charters of ESA as a "national resource." TSF General Secretary Mark Lau Branson often encourages TSF members and chapters to affiliate with ESA.

In a recent editorial, ESA Executive Director Bill Kallio wrote,

Signs showing our nation is headed toward kingdom values are few. Look at the evidence. Instead of protecting civil rights and eliminating the demonic effects of racism, our government only talks about reverse discrimination and getting rid of affirmative action. Instead of a strong national commitment to the defense of the poor and powerless we find only tax incentives for the rich and a strong bias against the needs of the poor and unemployed. Instead of seeking peace we pump billions of dollars into military weapons and push the world closer to nuclear holocaust. Instead of economic justice we talk only about philanthropy. Instead of becoming solidly pro-life on the great issues of our time, we retreat into selfish individualism and choose death.

Our society needs to hear the liberating message of the gospel. It needs to know the hope and new life found only in Jesus Christ. It needs a moral anchor in a stormy sea of national confusion and distortion. In short, our nation needs the firm values of a just society.

For further information about ESA, write to Evangelicals for Social Action, 25 Commerce S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49503.

OVERSEAS MINISTRIES STUDY CENTER

The unique combination of informal continuing education, community life and first-class resource persons makes the OMSC an ideal setting for hearing about missions. In addition to the featured speakers, the community offers Bible study/discussions, times for prayer and worship, and programs for children.

In the fall, several sessions will be of interest to TSF members. Steve Holbrook (Sept. 16-17), director of the Princeton Management Association, will speak on "Effective Decision-making and Personal Growth." Myron and Jan Chartier (Sept. 20-24) will lead a series on "Understanding Yourself as Person, Partner and Parent." Joe Bayly (Oct. 5-8) will speak on "Jeremiah and Social Upheaval." Waldron Scott and Ronald White (Oct. 19-22) will deal with "Christian Mission and Social Justice: Witnessing with Integrity." For more information, write the Overseas Ministries Study Center, Box 2057, Ventnor, NJ 08406.