

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Theological Students Fellowship (TSF) Bulletin (US)* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_tsfbulletin-us.php



BULLETIN

THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FELLOWSHIP

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER 1985

Vol. 9, No. 1

\$3.50

EDITOR

Vernon C. Grounds

ASSISTANT EDITOR

William Mangrum

ADVISORY EDITORS

Clark H. Pinnock, McMaster Divinity College

Paul A. Mickey, Duke Divinity School

Mark Lau Branson

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Ray S. Anderson, *Systematic Theology*
Fuller Theological Seminary

Stephen T. Davis, *Philosophy*
Claremont McKenna College

Donald Dayton, *News Analysis*
Northern Baptist Theological Seminary

Roberta Hestenes, *Christian Formation*
Fuller Theological Seminary

Robert L. Hubbard, *Old Testament*
Denver Seminary

Stephen C. Mott, *Ethics*
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Mark Noll, *Church History*
Wheaton College

Grant R. Osborne, *New Testament*
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

David Lowes Watson, *Evangelism & Missions*
UMC Board of Discipleship

PERSPECTIVES EDITORS

Keith Bolton, Fuller Theological Seminary

Luis Cortes, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Thomas F. Stransky, Mt. Paul Novitiate

Sze-kar Wan, Harvard University

FACULTY CONTRIBUTORS

Bernard Adeney, New College, Berkeley

Donald Bloesch, University of Dubuque Theological Seminary

Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Fuller Theological Seminary

Richard Bube, Stanford University

Harvie M. Conn, Westminster Theological Seminary

Charles Ellenbaum, College of DuPage

Vernard Eller, University of LaVerne

Elouise Renich Fraser, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary

David Gill, New College, Berkeley

Larry Hurtado, University of Manitoba

Susanne Johnson, Perkins School of Theology

Richard Mouw, Fuller Theological Seminary

Richard Lovelace, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

PHEME PERKINS, Boston College

Bernard Ramm, American Baptist Seminary of the West

Gerald Sheppard, Union Theological Seminary

Charles R. Taber, Emmanuel School of Religion

Keith Yandell, University of Wisconsin

An Introduction and a Welcome 2

Toward A Curriculum of Forgiveness
Carnegie Samuel Calian 3

William Tyndale: A Review of
Literature
Donald Dean Smeeton 5

Evangelical Theology in the
Two Thirds World
Orlando Costas 7

Antony of Coma: Spiritual Formation
in the Egyptian Wilderness
Stephen Brachlow 12

Houston '85: Views From Two Students 16

Book Reviews and Comments (Itemized on Back Cover) 17

Toward a Curriculum of Forgiveness

by Carnegie
Samuel Calian

"What do you learn in seminary?" a college student recently asked me. I could have answered that we master Hebrew and Greek, analyze the Bible and theological dogmatics from cover to cover, become prophets in the pulpit, and finely hone our counseling skills!

But our conversation covered a more realistic range of subjects. The student noted that various graduate schools are easily categorized by their intended mission—for instance, a medical school is associated with healing and acquiring diagnostic skills; a law school is interested in interpreting regulations and the rights of citizens within due process; business schools are concerned with profit-making and management; and an engineering school with precision calculations and projects. But what is the main thrust of the seminary?

Theological seminaries are schools of interpretation. The seminary is a hermeneutical center based upon a traditional fourfold curricular structure featuring the disciplines of Bible, theology, church history, and practical theology. Variations and sub-specialties are built around this basic fourfold structure called a "theological encyclopedia."

ical malpractice, by becoming well prepared practitioners laboring within the Body of Christ.

However, to be a learned clergy dependent upon a learned faculty is not enough. We need a unifying purpose to fuse our intellect and piety together for action. We need to recover a common theological base for reflection and action as believers. The college student I mentioned earlier was really asking me a fundamental question when he inquired, "What do you learn in seminary?" To state it another way, what does theological education offer society? What unique skills are acquired from the seminary that have credibility within secular society? What are we proposing to accomplish in theological education? What can the faculty, administration, and trustees promise seminarians and supporters? Only a curriculum with clear intention will prepare our graduates for their practice of ministry. Choosing and defining this intention ought to be an exciting concern on every seminary campus.

Some observers wonder if theological education under any theme is designed to cope with the real world. Theological communities have found theological language inadequate; they

Only forgiveness will enable us to be touched with the healing realities of our hymns as we encounter the real world of daily events.

Theologian Edward Farley of Vanderbilt University, in his recent book *Theologia*, charges that seminary education under this fourfold paradigm has lost any semblance of theological coherence. There is no common theological understanding among the various disciplines of a seminary faculty. There doesn't seem to be any common end or purpose which unifies theological education today. Like many congregations, seminary faculties are polite, congenial, and seek to avoid conflict; thus, most faculty members tend to work in isolation from each other. Farley makes a plea for dialogue and theological coherence, but does not suggest what the content of this theological unity might be. This is a task for every seminary community to struggle, discuss, and debate. Such an exercise can be healthy for theological education seeking a clear self image as a graduate professional school.

The question, "What do we learn in seminary?" finds its answer through the curriculum. Developing a curriculum is primarily a responsibility of the faculty, but input is also needed from others interested in the future of the seminary and the church. The objective of the curriculum is to graduate persons for a learned pastoral ministry, which in turn presupposes a learned faculty.

Unfortunately, there continues to be a gap between learning and doing in seminary life. Both are essential, but frankly, we sometimes try to practice before proper study and are guilty of pastoral malpractice. No professional can practice in the field without knowing the basic anatomy of their discipline. The seminary is more than a "how-to" school; it is primarily a school of interpretation of the Gospel message. One of the effective ways to combat church decline is to reduce theolog-

sometimes adopt the terms and causes of current events such as liberation, feminization, democratic socialism, democratic capitalism, individualism, communitarianism, self-actualization, etc. In the marketplace of ideas, theological insight is often buried under a bushel of ideologies; the social pronouncements of ecclesiastical organizations simply echo modified versions of the Democratic and Republican party platforms.

The uniqueness of the church's witness is lost among the prevailing moods of society. As a consequence, the seminary plays a game of "curriculum change"; it is often bombarded to add courses reflecting various deficiencies in society. In our efforts to be relevant, we sometimes trade off basic subjects in order to provide band-aids for the wounds of society.

Ironically, our attempt to solve problems by adding courses to the curriculum still leaves us with an insufficient number of "right" courses. At the same time, so few students are able to sign up for the elective courses offered, that faculty feel it is time for another curriculum revision. The process of adding courses fosters a dispersed curriculum, pushing many seminary faculty members into their specific interests and causing them to become strangers to one another.

One seminary dean is urging each faculty member to read the books of colleagues so that dialogue within the academic halls might take place again. A sense of cohesive structure cannot be relegated to a congenial atmosphere of uncritical tolerance.

Seminary Focus: Forgiveness

You may be asking whether a theological curriculum ought to have a single focus. I propose that the seminary curriculum find its sense of theological coherence within the theme of "forgiveness." The end goal of a theological curriculum is to graduate seminarians who have a realistic grasp on what the

Carnegie Samuel Calian is President and Professor of Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

power of forgiveness can do in an unforgiving society. Herein lies our unique contribution among the graduate schools of academia. The factor of forgiveness is a missing ingredient in a world bent on narrow self-interest and the capacity for self-destruction. The practice of forgiveness enhances the quality of all life and rehumanizes our existence with dignity.

Perhaps we ought to bestow graduates with a master's degree in forgiveness rather than divinity. This might more accurately describe what our daily objective as Christians ought to be. How can you and I go through a week of living without being a part of the forgiving process—bringing renewal and reconciliation to our fragmented society? The essence of the Christian faith is forgiveness. Christ is forgiveness in the flesh; can there be a more satisfying explanation of the incarnation than that? Forgiving one another is the human way of loving; it is a liberating means of experiencing fulfillment and joy.

From my perspective, forgiveness is the necessary premise for any sustaining effort at peacemaking. There is no shalom without forgiveness. To live by the forgiveness of God without

ily the hymns of the past, while cheating to survive in a world that we don't acknowledge.

Only forgiveness will enable us to be touched with the healing realities of our hymns as we encounter the real world of daily events. Forgiveness accepts the reality of sin, a reality often denied in our sophisticated but disillusioned society. We try to lessen the sting of sin and dilute our need for forgiveness. We search for an endless list of panaceas to rationalize our shortcomings, while society continues to be suspicious, vengeful and unforgiving. The Divine prescription of forgiveness has yet to be adopted by the majority. We often reject the painful struggle necessary before genuine forgiveness and renewal can be a vital part of our lives and communities.

How can we get this message across? The seminary can begin by providing leadership educated for reality, by integrating forgiveness into the curriculum and into our community life. We must realize at the same time that forgiveness involves a price of pain. The seminary is more than a sanctuary for scholarship; it is also a center for the practice of forgiveness.

Perhaps we ought to bestow graduates with a master's degree in forgiveness rather than divinity. This might more accurately describe what our daily objective as Christians ought to be.

forgiving one's enemy is inconceivable. This is true for persons, organizations, and nations. Forgiveness is not only a substantive matter in Christian theology; it can be the most durable thread from which theological education receives unity and strength. God's forgiveness and human forgiveness are intimately interwoven (Matt. 5 and Matt. 18). Baptism, eucharist, and penance are mediating channels by which divine forgiveness is expressed. The climactic prayer of Jesus on the cross for the forgiveness of his enemies (Lk. 23:34) highlights divine power and human need at the same time. Forgiveness comes from God and has the power to reconcile not only persons, but also classes, nations, and races. We have only experienced a glimpse of the potential that comes in power and reconciliation through forgiveness.

Forgiveness and the "Real World"

Yet the question persists: will a focus on forgiveness educate us for the "real world"? Sometimes, our desire to be in the real world is only a position of rhetoric; we tend actually to favor those examples and leaders which reinforce our biases and prejudices based upon earlier notions and myths that are no longer relevant. We nurture romantic illusions of the past and challenge new viewpoints. Leadership directed toward reality is today's need and a specific challenge for us in theological education. In his recent book, *The American Disease*, George C. Lodge claims that the American predisposition to deny reality is the American disease. We create a fictional existence by living yesterday's formulations in a changing world. We become creatures of contradiction, singing out lust-

During the student's first year of study, a conscious effort could be made to exegete the theme of forgiveness in biblical courses as well as introductory studies in other disciplines. There are many dimensions to forgiveness that need to be studied and digested. In the second year, a field-based course could be proposed to integrate the history, theology, ethics, and spirituality of forgiveness with emphasis on how local churches can become centers of forgiveness. In the life of the parish, problems of forgiveness are not separated into courses, but come in complex and unexpected packages. In the senior year, small group seminars under faculty leadership could focus on probing the enemies of forgiveness—such as power, property, pluralism, and pride—through case studies. Unchecked political power denies its own blindness and dehumanizes life; turf issues and questions of property have torn up more families, businesses, and nations than we can recount; uncritical pluralism can ultimately deny the goal for human unity and become demonic under the guise of tolerance; and pride, national and personal, can cause us to lose our objective perspective on our weaknesses and need for interdependence.

A three-year core curriculum on forgiveness is one way to restore the needed theological coherence within our historic fourfold curricular structure. This would enable us to become disciples of forgiveness for a fragmented world. I've presented this theme on forgiveness as a stimulus for our seminary communities. As we study and discuss curricular changes and themes, let us focus on a singular thrust of direction and meaning for theological education.

TSF BULLETIN (ISSN 0272-3913) is published bimonthly during the academic year (September–June). Editorial address is Theological Students Fellowship, 233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703. **Subscriptions:** \$15 per year (\$25/year for institutions) for five issues. Add \$2.00 per year for postage to addresses outside the U.S. U.S. currency only. Send subscriptions and address changes to TSF Subscriptions, 233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703. Allow six weeks for address changes to become effective. **Manuscripts:** Although unsolicited material is welcomed, editors cannot assure response in less than three months. Please enclose a self-addressed envelope and return postage.

TSF BULLETIN is a member of the Associated Church Press and of the Evangelical Press Association, and is indexed with abstracts in *Religion Index One: Periodicals*, American Theological Library Association, Chicago available online through BRS (Bibliographic Retrieval Services), Latham, New York and DIALOG, Palo Alto, California. Back issues are available from TSF, and are available on microfiche from Vision Press, 15781 Sherbeck, Huntington Beach, CA 92647. An annual index is published in the May/June issue. TSF BULLETIN does not necessarily speak for Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in its articles and reviews. Although editors personally sign the IVCF basis of faith, our purpose is to provide resources for biblical *thinking* and *living* rather than to formulate "final" answers. © 1985 by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, U.S.A. Second-class postage paid at Madison, Wisconsin. POSTMASTER: send address changes to 233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703.
