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# TSF BULLETIN

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to all the major issues of the text-critical task. He stated:

There is no early biblical manuscript of which I am aware no matter how "accurate" we may conjecture it to be, or faithful to its *Vorlage* (= the copy it was modeled on), that does not have some trace in it of its having been adapted to the needs of the community (p. 13).

Moreover, what we learn as we listen to the tradents checks our own proclivity towards post-Enlightenment *hubris*: "We are heirs of a very long line of tradents and not necessarily more worthy of the traditions than they" (p. 29).

B. Childs devoted an entire chapter to the question of "Text and Canon" in his monumental *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (1979). He, like Talmon, argued that there is an overlap between the literary and textual history of Old Testament books; he stressed that the textual changes were minor compared to the literary activity (Jeremiah showing the widest degree of variation in the textual phase). According to Childs,

A basic characteristic of the canonical approach in regard to both its literary and textual level is its concern to describe the literature in terms of its relation to the historic Jewish community rather than seeing its goal to be the reconstruction of the most original literary form of the book, or the most pristine form of a textual tradition (pp. 96-97).

He went on to argue for the priority of the Masoretic text in recovering the canonical text of the Old Testament.

P. Ackroyd's essay (1977) touched on textual criticism only tangentially, but has important implications for how one views the goal of textual criticism. He stated,

The authority of the biblical word is neither a matter of finding an "original" text which is accepted as coming direct from God; that search is often unproductive, but it may also take us back in a sense too far. Nor is it a matter of acceptance only of the finally agreed "canonical" form, . . . authority rests in the interaction between text and reader . . ." (pp. 171-72).

The nature of the authority of a biblical text is thus very much at stake when one engages in textual criticism.

For the above scholars, the textual study of the OT seeks to determine what if anything was intended by the variants reflected in the history of the Hebrew text and of translations made wholly or in part from a Hebrew text (Aramaic, Greek, Latin, and Syriac). It seeks to understand how and why a certain reading was preserved. It is thus an avenue for the exploration of the history of interpretation; more narrowly, an avenue for a better understanding of the text in its various forms. Its primary goal is not to reconstruct a hypothetical "original," but to understand the non-"originals" we now possess, in particular the Masoretic text.

For Childs and Sanders, the textual study of the OT makes it clear that the community which preserved the text cannot be divorced from the text itself. By implication, the nature of biblical authority will be misconceived without a proper recognition of the formative role church and synagogue played in the formation of the Bible.

Evangelicals have been severely criticized for pursuing studies on the periphery of biblical studies (Barr 1977, pp. 128f.). Perhaps recent trends in textual criticism will enable evangelicals to follow the paths of their ancestors and yet be allowed to enter the Promised Land of biblical theology. Certainly the concerns touched on above—a better understanding of the text, and the nature of biblical authority—are concordant with the concerns of biblical theologians of all persuasions.

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## INTERSECTION

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

### EVANGELICAL WOMEN'S CAUCUS By Ann Ramsey Moor

"I thought I was the *only one* who felt this way!" A few years ago, when Evangelical Women's Caucus was in its infancy, this statement was commonplace. To women (and some men) across the continent who had become privately convinced that there was a biblical basis for the equality of the sexes in church, home, and society, the knowledge that there were others who shared their conviction often came as a real surprise.

Today, in 1981, biblical feminism is no longer a novelty. EWC's international membership (now around 600) attests to that, as does the growing number of evangelical women who are going off to seminary.

Yet, despite their burgeoning ranks, theologically conservative women in North America's seminaries may still experience a certain sense of isolation. In some evangelical theological schools, women preparing for the pastorate may encounter thinly veiled hostility from male counterparts who question the legitimacy of what they are doing. In more pluralistic institutions, women who are trying to grapple honestly and carefully with "sticky passages" in the New Testament may be written off as hopeless literalistic.

Even without such conflicts, women in seminary tend to have somewhat different needs and problems than do men. Many embark upon their studies after a number of years of other life and work experiences: training for other professions, holding various jobs, and/or raising small children. Unlike male seminarians, who are often single and/or just out of college, they may not have the luxury of devoting all their time and energy to academic and field work. Furthermore, in line with a wider ranging and more wholistic concept of ministry, women frequently want to prepare for innovative ministerial situations, such as a hospital chaplaincy or staffing a halfway house or crisis center.

As a grass-roots organization of Christians attempting to become, and help others to become "all they're meant to be," Evangelical Women's Caucus can help enrich the lives of women seminarians or graduate students looking for intellectual, emotional, and spiritual support. Three of EWC's six active chapters are located in major centers of theological education (Boston, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay area), and almost all local or regional chapters have theological students in their membership. Several TSF groups also have close ties with EWC.

While chapters vary in structure and emphasis from location

to location, each provides a setting where aware-and-growing women can share with and learn from one another. A typical chapter meeting might comprise anything from discussion of a new book (e.g., Patricia Gundry's *Heirs Together* or Leonard Swidler's *Biblical Affirmations of Woman*), to hearing a clergy couple talk about their experiences in the pastorate, to viewing a film on sexism in advertising. Some chapters also have small support groups where women can get together and talk on a more informal basis.

Every other year, the wider EWC organization holds a plenary conference. (Its fifth such conference, "Women and the Promise of Restoration," will take place July 21-25, 1982, in Seattle.) Historically, these conferences have been a deep source of affirmation to women struggling, sometimes against great odds, to be true to God's call on their lives. In addition, most EWC chapters sponsor annual or semiannual conferences on various themes.

Evangelical Women's Caucus also publishes a quarterly newsletter, *EWC Update*. Among other things, it features reviews of books of interest to biblical feminists and a resources column. Membership in the international organization (\$15 a year regular, \$5 students or low income) includes a year's subscription to *Update*.

EWC extends a cordial invitation to seminarians interested in or committed to maturity in all spheres of life, to become part of its fellowship. For further information, contact Ann Ramsey Moor, Public Information Officer, 725-G Blair Court, Sunnvale, CA 94087.

## **SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

*(Probing questions, suggestions, and encouragement in areas of personal and spiritual growth)*

### **TOUGH AND TENDER—A WORD TO GRADUATING SEMINARIANS**

**By Donald McKim, Lecturer at Westminster College and Stated Supply Pastor of Friendship United Presbyterian Parish (PA).**

Dear Graduates,

The three years have raced by quickly. Now it's time to face the church and the world full-time. Many words ring in your ears at graduation: Administer! Counsel! Educate! Preach! Witness! All of these are high on the agenda for the church you have been called to serve. Often these and a host of others will compete for your attention. They will vie for priority. How can you do them all? How will you at times decide from among them? But most importantly: How will you fulfill your task as minister of the Christian gospel with integrity in the midst of a world of oil crises and Three-Mile Islands?

On the eve of their commissioning, Jesus gave his disciples two prescriptions: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt. 10:16).

"Be wise as serpents." To put its meaning in our own terms, Jesus instructed his followers to use their ability for critical reflection. They must draw on all their resources so their work for his kingdom will be intelligent and meaningful. The serpent is the ancient symbol of wisdom. So Jesus commands his followers to bring to their lives and leadership in an antagonistic world, the best thought and experience they can muster.

Merely having a degree from a theological seminary does not insure that you will always be as "wise as a serpent" or that your wisdom will always be the best course. But Christ calls

you to bring the creative intelligence which your training has fostered in you to bear as you work in your churches. Your task as a minister of Christ's Gospel is to bring to your people the very best you can offer in helping them to think critically and theologically about their problems, this world, and the Word of God for each of us. At best you will be an "amateur" theologian. We all are. None of us ever really "arrive." Yet you must bring to your people the most acute theological thinking of which you are capable. The world and the church with all our problems demand no less. There is a tough-mindedness to the ministerial task: "Be wise as serpents."

But Jesus goes on to command: "Be harmless as doves." To put it another way, Jesus calls us to use our capacity to love. The dove was a proverbial symbol of gentleness, of simplicity. And though we may be as sharp as Socrates and as brilliant as Barth, if we have not love — the world will never take us seriously. One of our greatest enemies in the church and as ministers is the credibility gap. There is so often that yawning chasm between our faith profession and our performance where we live.

We must communicate credibility. We are not called to be skillful manipulators or efficient experts in church growth through techniques alone. We work and witness by the congruence of our lives and our churches' lives with the message we proclaim and embody. What Joe Namath really believes about the popcorn poppers or after-shave he splashes on television really doesn't count for much. But for we who are ambassadors for Christ it is altogether different. Our message must have integrity and it must be matched by the identity of our lives with the life Christ calls for.

"Be as innocent as doves." Put into practice your power to love. For love is the tender medium through which our ministries move. Murdo Macdonald, who has interpreted Jesus' words as outlined above, reminds us that in his autobiography, Berdyaev the Russian philosopher describes the case of Mother Maria. When the Nazis were liquidating Jews in their gas chambers, one sobbing mother would not part with her baby. The officer in charge was only interested in the correct number of persons to be killed. So Mother Maria, without a word, pushed that mother aside and quietly took her place in line. This was what brought Berdyaev into the Christian faith—not elaborate philosophies or even scrupulous theology. But it was this costly act of love which gave credibility to the Gospel message.

Take this command of Christ as your own as you graduate from seminary. Let it influence the way you live and work as Christ's servants. Be tough-minded; be tender-hearted. As Jesus said, "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." God bless you in your ministry.

#### **IF YOUR ADDRESS CHANGES BEFORE MAY 30 . . .**

. . . Let us know. In sending your new address, advise us of your moving date and your current address. (If possible, send us a label from a TSF publication.) We don't want you to miss the *May Themelios*.

### **HENRI NOUWEN: SPIRITUAL GUIDE FOR A CHURCH IN TRANSITION** **By Robert Durbach**

One of the finest moments of vaudeville in the forties was when Jimmy Durante would run excitedly to the center of the stage before an electrified audience and yell: "STOP THE MUSIC!" The band, which had been going full blast with trumpet, sac, and clarinet, piano, drum, fiddle and bass, would come to a squealing halt. The music stopper would then proceed to castigate his accompanists, flaying them for a false