

EXCALIBUR

A publication of the Taylor University conservative underground

February 2018

Vol. 1 | No. 1

WHO ARE WE?

We are Taylor University faculty, staff and students who heartily affirm the historic orthodox theological doctrines, as expressed in the Apostles creed and other classic ecumenical Christian creeds. We also believe, among other things, (1) that the traditional view of marriage as a monogamous covenant between one man and one woman is the only reasonable Christian view, (2) that a creationist view of human origins deserves better representation at a Christian college such as ours, (3) that the sanctity of human life, respect for the rule of law, and the principle of equal liberty are essential to the survival of the American republic, and (4) that a conservative-libertarian approach to race relations is most respectful of racial minorities and holds out the most promise for long term racial justice in this country.

WHY CONSERVATIVE?

While the values expressed here warrant consistent and explicit expression in the Taylor community, in recent times this has been done inadequately across campus, whether in classrooms, the chapel program, faculty publications, or by invited speakers on campus. Moreover, we perceive a growing trend on campus of opinions opposing and undermining the above commitments, including permissivist views of human sexuality, hostility toward creationist perspectives, rejection of the rule of law (especially on the immigration issue), and uncritical endorsement of liberal-progressive ideals (e.g., in the form of Marxist-inspired critical race theory).

WHY GO “UNDERGROUND”?

Campus publications (e.g., the Echo) offer insufficient means to counter leftist trends, and this forum allows us to articulate our conservative stances boldly, extensively, and without editorial filter. Also, our current cultural climate makes so much of personality that withholding our identities will help to keep the focus on the issues rather than who we are. Finally, secretive newspapers have a long and respectable tradition for artfully generating thoughtful discussion and consideration of alternative views on American college campuses. For these reasons, we believe our most practical and educational recourse is to . . . go underground!

“There is a limit at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue.”

—Edmund Burke

THE SHEPHERD’S VOICE

John chapter 10 details one of many fascinating and confrontational encounters between Jesus and the Pharisees. In that interchange, Jesus makes the claim that he is the shepherd of the sheep and that when a stranger enters in and speaks, the sheep will not follow because the sheep will not recognize the stranger’s voice. It should be noted that in the analogy, Christ’s followers are the sheep. The fact that sheep are, by and large, dumb creatures should not be lost on the reader. While there are many profound conclusions one can draw from this metaphor, it is at the very least a warning to his sheep to beware of the voice of strangers. Further, the sheep actually have the capacity to and are expected to distinguish between what is

familiar and what is strange.

Jesus’ comments are significant for us today. Perhaps most significant is the fact that he is warning his followers that when (not if) strangers enter into their midst and speak with voices unfamiliar to them, the real sheep won’t follow. Not only so, but they will run away. 2 Peter 2 warns the reader with specific clarity as to what these voices will sound like: “But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves... And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.”

I believe that a compelling case can be

made that the social justice movements sweeping across western culture, and that are by extension confronting the church, are such strangers entering our midst. The “strangers” incessant calls for social justice, diversity, and equality involve a pursuit that is so elusive and ill-defined in its objectives that it is difficult for one to know when one has reached such elevated status as being socially just. On the face of it, the pursuit of justice espoused by the social justice worldview might appear noble and practically workable in our culture. But a closer look proves the social justice understanding of justice is at odds with justice as has been understood throughout Western history.

According to Lori Molinari, PhD in the B. Kenneth Simon Center for Principles and

Politics of the Institute for Constitutional Government, when it comes to social justice “more mainstream progressives and liberals tend to focus on a more equal distribution of goods and opportunities, while those of a more leftward bent focus on ‘oppression’ among social groups. Whereas the former emphasize what is common among members of the human family, the latter stress divisions and differences between demographic groups while often also pragmatically emphasizing coalition-building among different ‘oppressed’ groups.”

Such a view of justice is in direct conflict with the classic Western concept of justice. Whereas the social justice worldview emphasizes group identity and desires a legal code ensuring equality of outcomes, a Western understanding of justice emphasizes individuality by embracing a legal code that ensures equality of opportunity for every in-

dividual. It is no small thing that the social justice worldview can be traced back to Karl Marx. His atheistic political philosophy relied heavily on the oppressed vs. oppressor narrative as a means by which one might uproot the powers that be. Of particular importance is the fact that anywhere Marx’s political philosophy has been embraced, innocent people, sometimes by the millions, have paid the price with their lives.

Consequently, here is the problem facing the church. An unsuspecting church populace, genuinely and admirably keen on seeking reconciliation of all sorts (as is biblical), is ripe for falling headlong into the trap of believing that a Marxist social justice worldview actually represents a clear path for how the church should understand reality and for how it should engage the issues of difference and power naturally present in the world. While not perfect, the Western notions

of justice have been the foundation upon which our nation has enabled more freedom and prosperity for more people, including racial minorities and LGBTQ individuals, than any nation in history. In that light, it would appear to be of significant importance for believers to cultivate an ear for our shepherd’s voice when it comes to social justice. This is done not by incessantly engaging in cultural and political debates but by engaging in the traditional spiritual disciplines that have been the means by which heroes of our faith have encountered God for centuries. Otherwise, we run the risk of embracing a deadly ideology in the name of loving our neighbor.

// **LEGBITER**



— THE IMPORTANCE OF IMAGO DEI —

Many issues to be addressed in *Excalibur* will boil down to a single, central Christian conviction regarding human nature. This is that human beings were created in the image of God (imago Dei). Scripture says, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him” (Gen. 1:27). Historically, Christians have interpreted this in diverse ways. Perhaps it refers to our share in divine rationality. Perhaps it has to do with our moral nature or our capacity for relationships. But whatever the particulars, it is clear from Scripture that human beings are unique in this regard and thus have a special standing and role, despite our fallenness, in the created order.

The imago Dei accounts for the inestimable value of human beings, a value that is sometimes expressed as the “sanctity of human life.” It is this which ultimately grounds the standard conservative Christian positions on a variety of moral-social issues, including:

❖ The pro-life stance on abortion—from the moment of their inception, human beings bear the image of God and thus no

“freedom to choose” trumps the value of fetal life.

- ❖ Opposition to euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide—however compromised one’s quality of life, they remain divine image bearers, so prematurely ending a life violates the sanctity of life.
- ❖ The duty to help the poor and disabled—the impoverished and physically or mentally handicapped bear the imago Dei no less than anyone else and thus deserve our assistance and protection.
- ❖ A creationist view of origins—that we are singled out in Scripture, among other ways, as bearing the divine image signals a strong distinction between humans and animals. This is just one reason why conservatives tend to be resistant to an evolutionary perspective which regards humans as just the most highly evolved creatures on earth.
- ❖ Resistance to the strong animal rights position—although there are strong biblical grounds for a Christian duty to care for creation and especially animals, humans have a special moral status and deserve priority of concern when it comes to ethical decision-making and public policy.

The importance of the imago Dei also explains why Christians are historically divided on certain issues, including capital punishment and the ethics of war, since contrary views on these issues can be defended by appealing to the sanctity of life.

As you read future installments of *Excalibur*, you will notice an emphasis on the sanctity of human life and the imago Dei on which this is based. Yes, our left-leaning fellow Christians insist that their stances better respect the sanctity of life. So long as we agree, however, that human life is special and inestimably valuable because of the imago Dei, then we share a substantive foundation for productive debate on moral and social issues. But once this is rejected, we lose that crucial common ground. We might as well be operating from different worldviews. For the one who rejects this crucial tenet of biblical anthropology no longer espouses an essentially Christian theology.

// **DURENDAL**



From: Announcements
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2018 12:07 PM
Subject: Taylor Community letter from the President



Memorandum

To: The Taylor Community
From: Paul Lowell Haines, President
Re: Excalibur Newsletter
Date: February 23, 2018

For the last 47 years of my relationship with Taylor University, I have been proud of the Taylor community's ability to have open and vigorous dialogue over the issues of the day, to wrestle with differences of opinion, and to always seek either common ground or better understanding. This university, this Christian institution of higher learning, has long been a place where community members aspire to acknowledge their differences, while striving to love and to seek God's best for each other. This is the Taylor I have known, and it is the Taylor I love.

Unfortunately, earlier this week, we were confronted with an incident that fell short of Taylor's lofty goals for life together. On Wednesday, an "underground," secretive newsletter was distributed that purported to add "boldly" to the debate on several serious issues.

To the contrary, the unsanctioned, anonymous, and suspect distribution of the publication sewed discord and distrust, hurting members of our community. I am disappointed in the drafters and distributors of "Excalibur" for their method of addressing these issues, and especially for their lack of foresight and sensitivity regarding how this approach could impact community members, especially those of color. Whatever their good intentions, they failed.

The Towel reminds us that community is messy – and is meant to be done in person and face to face. We cannot be a place of anonymous newsletters delivered in the dark with no attribution. Rather, we must wrestle with issues of the day openly, honestly, and freely, but always seeking to find God's truth in the midst of a complex world.

To those members of our community who have been hurt by this newsletter and the ill-conceived manner in which it was delivered, I assure you that you are loved, valued and safe here. You are of great value to God, to me, and to your brothers and sisters in Christ at Taylor University.

I was struck by and concur with a tweet broadcasted in response to this incident:

Anonymous commentary can create chaos in a community without assuming any of its risk. The real value of dialogue is the opportunity to seek to understand one another and to avoid reducing one another to an incomple label. Human complexity requires more of us...so does love.

I am frustrated that we find ourselves here. Yet, I remain confident that we can continue to be the community that I have always loved. We must engage ideas on their merit, and be willing to risk offense for the sake of truth. This is the heart of a liberal arts education. But we can never forget the ideals of life together and the responsibility we bear for "one another."