

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 1982

Vol. 6, No. 1

\$2.00

EDITOR

Mark Lau Branson TSF General Secretary

ADVISORY EDITORS

Clark H. Pinnock, *Systematic Theology*
McMaster Divinity College

Paul A. Mickey, *Practical Theology*
Duke Divinity School

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Stephen T. Davis, *Philosophy*
Claremont McKenna College

Donald Dayton, *News Analysis*
Northern Baptist Theological Seminary

Robert L. Hubbard, *Old Testament*
Denver Seminary

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

Donald Tinder, *Church History*
New College, Berkeley

David Lowes Watson, *Evangelism*
Perkins School of Theology

PERSPECTIVES EDITORS

Elward D. Ellis Madison, WI

Luis Cortes Philadelphia, PA

Nancy A. Hardesty Atlanta, GA

Thomas F. Stransky Oak Ridge, NJ

FACULTY CONTRIBUTORS

Bernard Adeney Church Divinity School
of the Pacific

Donald Bloesch University of Dubuque
Theological Seminary

Geoffrey W. Bromiley Fuller Theological
Seminary

Charles Ellenbaum College of DuPage

Vernard Eller University of LaVerne

David Gill New College, Berkeley

Larry Hurtado University of Manitoba

Susanne Johnson Perkins School
of Theology

Richard Mouw Calvin College

Thomas Oden Drew University
Theological School

PHEME PERKINS Boston College

Bernard Ramm American Baptist
Seminary of the West

Gerald Sheppard Union Theological
Seminary

Keith Yandell University of Wisconsin

Gregory A. Youngchild New Haven, CT

FOUNDATIONS

How I Use Tradition in Doing Theology Clark H. Pinnock 2

INQUIRY

Nag Hammadi and the New Testament PHEME PERKINS 6

EDITORIALS

TSF Bulletin Readers: Unity and Diversity John Duff 8

INTERSECTION

Striving for Obedience, Haunted by Dualism
The Consultation on the Relationship between
Evangelism and Social Responsibility Mark Lau Branson 10

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Spiritual Formation in the Seminary Community:
Signs of Renewed Concern Dick Daniels 13

ACADEME

Student Initiative: A Strategy for Service Mark Lau Branson 15

REVIEWS

Book Reviews (Itemized on back cover) 19

working paper

Student Initiative: A Strategy for Service

by Mark Lau Branson

Students at seminary are confronted with opportunities to participate in a variety of student groups, from special interest caucuses and action groups to broader organizations such as student governments or TSF chapters. Why should a student spend the time to be involved in these activities? If one does choose to participate, what should one expect these groups to accomplish? What contributions might national organizations be able to make?

This working paper is intended to address such questions. It will consider the context in the church and seminary world which makes such student involvement important, and it will offer a framework for setting goals and planning activities. Although the suggestions are especially intended for groups affiliated or otherwise in partnership with TSF, they can also be of help to student governments or other groups. We hope students will tear this article out, copy it, pass it around, discuss it, and offer comments and suggestions. With further revision, we hope it can become a resource of continuing and widespread usefulness.

CHANGES IN CHURCH AND SEMINARY

Along with the wider secular culture, the Christian church finds itself in the midst of changes. Old assumptions about theology and the church's role in the world are being challenged by new crises and opportunities. As the church tries to respond to the rapid movements within society, it can easily experience a sense of chaos or malaise. A debilitating loss of focus can occur in the midst of many competing agendas. At the same time, out of this turmoil seems to be emerging an exciting convergence.

Martin Marty, in *The Public Church*, calls this convergence a new ecumenical coalition, a merging of certain forces within evangelical, mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. This new "community of communities" offers a vision that draws on helpful resources from all these traditions and then seeks to minister faithfully to the world. It presents members of each tradition with an opportunity to avoid partisanship and to seek renewed commitment for the whole church. For example, insofar as an increasingly strong evangelicalism calls the church and the world to authentic repentance and obedience, it is to be celebrated. But where it exhibits triumphalism, remains unbiblical in its lack of concern for neighbors near and far, and shuns thoughtful criticism and reform, it does not deserve a following. If the church can practice careful discernment, the present turmoil could produce movement in positive new directions.

Seminaries and seminary students cannot avoid participating in the church's pangs. The seminary quickly becomes a place where the changes hitting the church are focused. If the seminary can avoid

becoming paralyzed by the turmoil, it has the potential of helping the church in this task of discernment. It should not just follow the church, but with grace and wise initiative should nurture the church in its pilgrimage. Martin Marty sees hope in the fact that something new is happening in the church; the seminary should be an influence that helps the right things happen.

Yet seminaries themselves are in the midst of significant and challenging changes. There are more women, more ethnic minorities, more evangelicals, more older students, and more married students who are all seeking their own place in institutions not accustomed to accommodating them. For example, women and ethnic minorities are welcomed with recruitment offers but find that theology and church history are still dominated by the "white man's" agenda. Evangelicals in mainline seminaries sometimes find warm welcomes, but in other places face unvoiced skepticism. Additional uncertainty is caused as job placement becomes a major concern to all students, one which at times can even overshadow important theological and ethical issues.

The complex relationships between seminaries, students, denominations and theological traditions provide additional sources of tension. The movement toward ecumenical cooperation between seminaries has often been marred by underlying tensions caused by jealousy, competition for students and finances, and a lack of understanding the real needs of their varying constituencies. Mainline denominations are sometimes disturbed to find their own students choosing to attend evangelical schools and then gaining not only a

The seminary should not just follow the church, but with grace and wise initiative should nurture the church in its pilgrimage.

very satisfactory education, but also quite possibly a more solid grounding in their own particular historical and theological traditions. On the other hand, graduates of evangelical schools are not necessarily prepared to work within the pluralism of the mainline denominations, or they may find themselves excluded from positions of influence. Women, while hearing rumors of reverse discrimination that should be favoring them, are discovering a disheartening time lag between denominational affirmation and search committee enlightenment.

In the face of so many currents, it is difficult for the seminary to step forward in creative and faithful ways; instead it may become a confused victim. Sometimes it moves in particular directions without knowing clearly enough what changes are needed, thus being too strongly influenced by agendas from the secular culture. At other times it reacts as an embattled conservative, clinging to its traditional

Mark Lau Branson began visiting seminary campuses for Theological Students Fellowship in 1976, and now serves as General Secretary.

© 1982 Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. Permission to copy this article in its entirety is hereby granted. TSF has a limited number of copies available in quantities of 5 for \$1. Send comments and/or orders to Theological Students Fellowship, 233 Langdon, Madison, WI 53703.

outlook and approach (whether liberal or evangelical). Yet if the seminary is to serve the church, denominational agendas must be expressed in service rather than in political clamoring; stereotypes that deny both history and present realities must be exposed; the Bible must be more than an object of a debate; and theology needs to become, rather than ammunition, a vibrant place where biblical studies, prayer and the needy world meet.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDENT INITIATIVE

Students live and study in the center of these pressures and opportunities. They bring with them perspectives that can help the seminary discover its servant role. Having roots in different traditions, they can see the impact of various theological and denominational forces. They arrive with high expectations, eager to gain tools, learn from scholars, experience ministry through practicums, and grow in the midst of a community. They seek truth and life in Scripture, clarity and guidance from theology, power and companionship from the Spirit, support and accountability from each other. Although administrators, professors and denominational leaders are rightly expected to provide some of these, they cannot be expected to furnish a fully adequate seminary experience.

Students must take initiative to help the seminary provide the most helpful environment and resources, not merely for themselves, but ultimately for the church. Student initiative in the seminary is being met with increasing approval. Formerly, administrators and denominational authorities often denigrated student initiative, especially when linked with organizations outside official channels. Perhaps such student groups side-tracked their agenda, or simply created defensiveness because their existence implied that seminary provi-

***It is the integration of these areas—
theology, spiritual formation and
mission—that presents the seminary
with an exacting and demanding
responsibility.***

sions were insufficient. But, more recently, such initiative is welcomed. As students take more responsibility for their own learning, personal growth and professional preparation, they reject the passive roles of simply being “company men” or inactive recipients. A more active approach stimulates learning, draws more from professors and creates a more positive seminary atmosphere.

It is in this kind of context that the Theological Students Fellowship seeks to serve. TSF is committed to the concept of student initiative. Although TSF does have distinctive insights and agendas to contribute, it is students who must join together to discern the needs on their campus and to plan appropriate ways to serve. The groups that result from student initiative can be of many kinds, including special interest groups as well as established student governments and other groups of general appeal. Both types have important contributions to make to the life of the seminary.

Special interest groups meet a variety of more narrowly focused needs. Caucuses provide a basis of fellowship and action for students who feel drawn together—women, ethnic minorities, or perhaps evangelicals. Action groups may form around important issues or ministries such as nuclear arms, world hunger, a local ministry, or child care for seminary families. These groups serve the important function of raising the seminary’s consciousness about particular needs, and provide a context for individuals to find the energy and support they need to work for change.

Yet such specialized groups may bring with them a tendency to splinter the campus community if deliberate efforts to form coalitions are not made. Such cooperation is likely only if individuals and groups make it a priority to empathize, learn, change and grow. Opportunities for friendship and the development of common agendas

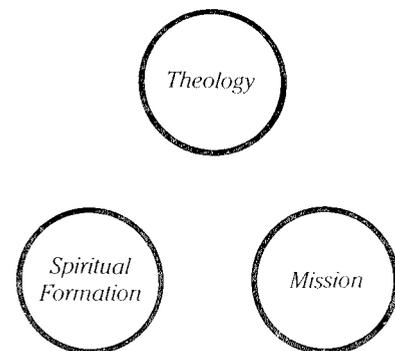
can emerge from time spent listening, studying, worshipping and planning together. When such efforts to build mutual respect and understanding do lead to shared agendas, caucuses and action groups can function even more powerfully because stereotypes are broken. Recent examples of such unexpected coalitions include the merging of “pro-life” and anti-nuclear advocates. The shared concerns for life and justice provide a powerful bond. Women’s groups have at times found true allies among evangelicals whose faithfulness to Scripture results in their calling for equality and new sensitivities in Bible study and ministry. Evangelicals, often dismissed as irrelevant to social issues during the past few decades, are now often joining actively in efforts to seek justice and peace.

While coalitions between special interest groups can make creative contributions, other groups are needed to serve the seminary as a whole. For example, student government organizations have certain defined responsibilities, often fulfilled through ongoing committees. These may produce a student newsletter, provide input on academics, coordinate worship, or attend to the rather all-encompassing issues of “student life.” But there is still a further need. Frequently the various elements of the seminary experience fail to harmonize in providing an integrated foundation for ministry. Academics, worship, fellowship, denominational involvement and social action threaten to exclude each other rather than cooperating together in theological education. By taking leadership in seeking greater integration and balance, TSF chapters and other groups have an opportunity to move beyond limited roles as special interest groups to serve the whole seminary community. By doing so, TSF chapters can also model the positive contributions an informed and faithful evangelicalism can make to the emerging “public church.”

A FRAMEWORK FOR APPRAISAL

The remainder of this working paper introduces a framework that can help TSF chapters and other groups develop strategies for serving in this way. It proposes a grid for viewing a school’s strengths and weaknesses so that appropriate activities can be developed. Careful evaluation and planning are important because groups often pursue agendas and activities without a prior analysis of the needs and milieu. Some plan conferences and meetings with little understanding of how an event’s helpfulness can be evaluated. Yet graduate students are painfully aware of the numerous demands on limited time and energy. In the midst of already overloaded schedules, additional options will attract attention and participation only if they meet real needs and promise to do so with distinction.

Our framework proposes considering three ingredients in a seminary education and participating in three recurring phases of student involvement. In order to accomplish its task, a seminary community needs to provide resources and guidance in the areas of theology, spiritual formation and mission. The phases of participation, retreat and initiation can provide the means for students’ serving. These categories can combine to form a grid helping students maintain a broad perspective on their school’s needs during all phases of their involvement. The categories will be explained here briefly, and then some useful activities for reaching particular goals will be mentioned. More detail on how, in practice, various groups have achieved their goals will be coming in future articles.



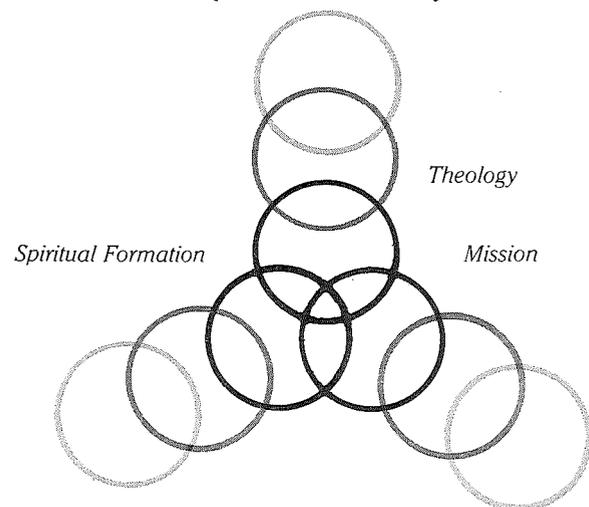
Three Elements of Seminary Education

Theology is the task of interpreting and communicating the Christian faith in a way that is both faithful and relevant to the contemporary world. If the seminary is going to equip its students for ministry in a church that is both threatened and revitalized by rapid changes, it must provide an abundant supply of theological resources. Most schools do offer at least some variety in theological traditions. Different approaches, both historical and contemporary, can usually be found. However, at mainline schools it is not uncommon for classical orthodoxy to receive careless exposition and deprecating evaluations. Liberalism, as developed during the last two centuries and apparent in various newer experiments, is not the only option. It should be discussed and evaluated as attention is also given to classical thought and more recent evangelical formulations. Similarly, conservative schools serve better if liberal options receive more than cursory dismissal. Also, biblical studies can benefit from the richness of alternative scholarly traditions. While a professor will probably work within the tradition personally deemed most helpful (whether Bultmannian, structuralist, dispensational or liberation) other resources should be available. Where the seminary environment does seem to restrict the options, students should take initiative in seeking alternatives.

In addition to assessing theological education, students should evaluate provisions for spiritual formation. These include all the resources which help students and professors grow in personal and corporate faithfulness, within the family, the church and the seminary community. Personal prayer, silent retreats, corporate worship and Bible study in the context of community are all needed. Spiritual directors and opportunities for instruction in the traditional disciplines of meditation, contemplation and fasting should also be available. The seminary community, with the proper resources for guidance, can provide the atmosphere of encouragement and accountability needed for spiritual growth.

Finally, the seminary is a place where attention is given to how the church fulfills its responsibilities in the world. Mission includes all the works of the kingdom—evangelism, church growth, social ethics, political reform, economic responsibilities and interreligious dialogue. These ministries may be located within a particular community (urban, suburban, rural) or reach across cultural or national boundaries. Mission activities are needed for exposure and hands-on experience. Pastors and seminarians too often lack contact with non-Christians. This lessens their ability to pastor lay people effectively. Community organizing, soup kitchens, beach evangelism, foreign missions, university ministry and neighborhood Bible studies all provide such opportunities. Seminarians can encounter other crucial issues of mission in the continuing dialogues about evangelism and social responsibilities, church growth agendas, contextualization and indigenization, the relationships between mission boards and national churches, and so forth.

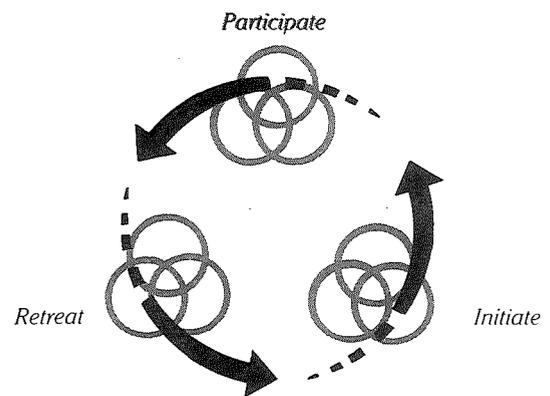
It is the integration of these areas—*theology*, *spiritual formation* and *mission*—that presents the seminary with an exciting and



demanding responsibility. While particular topics can be pursued independently at times, they must eventually merge. The areas of intersection between the three circles can suggest helpful questions in seeking integration. Does the study of theology remain a purely academic pursuit, or does it influence our prayer life and become the foundation for our political involvement? Do we allow the worship life of the church to influence what we pursue as legitimate questions in our courses? As academic and spiritual life are nurtured, do they properly push towards mission in the world? Does our involvement in ministry lead us deeply into prayer, or does it remain mere activism? A biblical wholeness must be our goal. Thinking, acting and praying belong together. Through activities it sponsors, a TSF chapter can be a catalyst not only for strengthening each of these concerns, but also for emphasizing the needed integration of all three areas.

Three Phases of Involvement

In order for a chapter to serve effectively, three phases of involvement are needed. These are initially sequential, but later may operate simultaneously. First students must actively *participate* in the life of the campus. This includes not only classes and chapel services, but also student government, academic councils, campus publications and various caucuses and organizations. This active identification with others and collaboration in activities must be the starting point. In that context, the strengths and weaknesses of the school are discerned, shared concerns are discovered, sensitivity to the hurts and joys of others is developed, and common agendas begin to form.



Individual or group *retreat* is then needed for reflection, meditation, prayer and planning. A day of silence, along with Bible reading and journaling, can provide a setting for clarifying impressions and hearing God's directions. Perhaps a retreat leader or a book by Richard Foster or Elizabeth O'Connor could help. Such a retreat is a step of faith. It puts into practice our confidence in a God who grants wisdom and honors our work of listening. Following silence, the chapter's leaders and participants can share what they have learned through participation, sensed as they prayed, discovered as they studied and envisioned as they looked for paths of ministry. Personal intuition, the guidance of Scripture, the comments of other students and the goals involved in professional preparation all coalesce at this point.

Only after participation and retreat is a group ready to *initiate*. In seeking to serve, a chapter must move beyond its own needs and minister in light of the needs of the whole seminary community. While a particular cluster of TSF concerns offers certain perimeters (theology that is faithful to Scripture, spirituality that is vital and foundational, missions that link proclamation with service), initiatives must be contextualized. Activities must be pursued in a manner that opens doors for cooperation, gains the respect of faculty and students and helps create an atmosphere of learning, growth and service. Events can be jointly sponsored with other campus organizations such as a women's center, mission groups, ethnic caucuses and worship committees. Connections with TSF groups at nearby seminaries or with national organizations such as the Evangelical Women's Caucus can also offer opportunities for cooperative efforts that draw students and faculty into more broadly based activities.

Possible Activities

To meet student needs for academic resources, a chapter can host visiting lecturers, sponsor sessions for reading and discussing student papers, encourage faculty dialogues, and promote *TSF Bulletin* and other bibliographic sources. Spiritual formation can be enhanced through support/prayer groups, Bible studies, evenings for fellowship and worship, retreats and seminars, and programs that link students with pastors, professors or lay people who are equipped to serve as spiritual directors. A chapter seeking to inform and encourage mission can do so through speakers, book studies, local projects, correspondence with missionaries, and short-term involvement in other states or nations. Also of value are classes co-sponsored by TSF during "January term" at the Overseas Ministries Study Center or during spring break at a seminar on "Proclamation Evangelism" in Ft. Lauderdale. A chapter can also draw on the resources of such groups as Evangelicals for Social Action, Bread for the World, and Clergy and Laity Concerned.

TSF Bulletin can serve all these concerns through its articles and reviews. The interaction with differing viewpoints, the appreciation for various church traditions, and what we hope is a helpfully self-critical approach to evangelicalism are means to encourage thinking, listening and creative faithfulness. The array of topics, working toward the integration mentioned earlier, can help prevent myopic approaches to education. *TSF Bulletin* can be a basis for group discussions, a source for discovering books, and a respected journal to share with other students and professors.

Although a chapter will be aware of many needs and options, in its planning it needs to decide on a few agenda items that reflect clearly-established goals and priorities. The demands for time and energy necessitate that extracurricular activities be kept few so that they can be done well. Such a ministry will be valued by others and create opportunities for respect and influence. Because the three phases of involvement—participation, retreat, initiation—are cyclical, the priorities can be revised as time goes on. Changing needs, new issues, different classes and varying denominational agendas will influence the campus, and therefore must affect the chapter's program.

To help implement these strategies, TSF editors and field staff are working to serve seminarians. We have learned that a chapter becomes better focused and works more intentionally when a written document is created to serve as a purpose statement and constitution. The doctrinal basis and the recently-revised ministry objectives of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship are provided here. Perhaps they can be helpful not only in formulating such a statement but also in clarifying one's long-range goals in ministry. A statement from Professor Paul Mickey has been included to offer reflections on the advantages of affiliating with Theological Students Fellowship as a national organization. Charter applications and sample constitutions are available from the TSF office. As the year progresses, we will publish reports of chapter activities. (We prefer to receive these from chapters so that we don't have to make them up!) There are over 1000 student readers of *TSF Bulletin*, and we estimate that an additional 350 are active in local groups. Through prayerful, well-planned service, students will have an increasingly helpful and powerful role in graduate education and in the continuing renewal of the church.

THE WHOLE GOSPEL FOR THE WHOLE WORLD OMSC JANUARY MISSION SEMINARS FOR THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS.

This year Theological Students Fellowship is joining twenty-nine seminaries in co-sponsoring the January term for seminarians at the Overseas Ministries Study Center. Each of the four-week courses is an independent unit, but together they give a comprehensive survey. Students may register for any week or combination of weeks, and one may receive academic credit at one's own school if prior arrangement is made with the seminary administration. The topics for the four weeks are "Crucial Dimensions in Mission" (Jan. 3-7); "Points of Tension in Mission" (Jan. 10-14); "The Universal Scope and Scandal of the Gospel: Tribal Gods and the Triune God," with Kosuke Koyama (Jan. 17-21); and "Evangelism and Liberation in Mission: The Latin American Experience," with Jose Miguez Bonino (Jan. 24-28). For more information write the Overseas Ministries Study Center, P.O. Box 2057, Ventnor, NJ 08406.

IVCF Doctrinal Basis

1. The unique divine inspiration, entire trustworthiness and authority of the Bible.
2. The Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. The necessity and efficacy of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ for the redemption of the world, and the historic fact of His bodily resurrection.
4. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration.
5. The expectation of the personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

IVCF Campus Ministry Objectives

We desire to establish, assist and encourage groups of students and faculty who give witness to Jesus Christ as God Incarnate, who are in agreement with our basis of faith and who:

- I. *Evangelize their academic community by*
 - A. demonstrating commitment to penetrate their entire campus with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - B. knowing how to verbalize the Gospel and how to respond to questions people ask concerning the Gospel.
 - C. living a life of compassion and justice.
 - D. leading others to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
 - E. incorporating new believers into the Christian community.
- II. *Join the world mission of the church by*
 - A. knowing the call of God and their role in the world mission of the church.
 - B. praying for the needs of the world.
 - C. giving financially to world missionary endeavors.
 - D. participating in cross-cultural ministry projects.
 - E. reaching out to International students.
- III. *Grow as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ by*
 - A. studying and obeying the Bible.
 - B. praying individually and with others.
 - C. participating in a local church.
 - D. exercising biblical leadership and community.
 - E. demonstrating Christ's Lordship in relationships, possessions, academics, vocation and all other aspects of life.

WHY GO NATIONAL?

As seminary students convene in groups at first loosely known as TSF, the inevitable question arises: "Why should we belong to TSF as a national organization? Can't we do the same thing without identifying with an off-campus organization?"

The principal advantage of relating the local "chapter" to the national organization is *continuity*. Students are necessarily a highly transient group, lacking relatively enduring organizational and theological structures. A group may quickly disintegrate into a personality cult or a less effective, defensive clique. While some autonomy is surrendered by affiliating, the gains are greater. Because the agenda and invitation of TSF are stated forthrightly for all, expectations can be clearer, especially for the slow reactors who need a year or so to make a final decision. Potential speakers, too, want to know what kind of group is inviting them when invitations are offered. People want and anticipate stability in an organization before making a substantial commitment.

A second issue invariably arises: not every individual wants to be fully allied with the national organization. Does pressing for the local group to claim a corporate identity exclude those not in a position personally to affiliate with TSF? In my mind there are three types of people in TSF. First is the *hard core* student, who personally accepts TSF beliefs and embraces its purposes. Second is the *living room visitor*, who actively participates in some TSF-sponsored activities, but is unwilling to buy into the whole package. Third is the *window shopper* with modest and tentative involvement, a reluctance to get too close, but a continuing, tangential interest. All three types are on campus, and all are welcome to relate to TSF at the level of their respective commitments. But a strong continuity of organizational value is needed for all three types. This is why it seems wise to me for TSF groups to relate to TSF nationally.

—Paul A. Mickey
Duke Divinity School