

the Enquiry

STUDENT PUBLICATION

Southeastern Baptist Seminary, Vol. I, No. 2, October 13, 1964

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE

Side by side they sat, two theological students, jointly reading an article written by a conservative author and alternately quoting select portions which they eisegeted and ridiculed with great delight and much raucous laughter. With almost uncontrollable hilarity, they laughed at the stupidity of one who still believes in certain traditional Christian doctrines which they have long since regarded as obsolete. In another situation, a seminary professor became the object of scorn and insult because he did not agree that Moses is responsible for all the material in the book of Deuteronomy. His logical explanation of his position was not even accorded a serious hearing.

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the pros and cons of any particular approach to theology, but to deal with an unchristian attitude all too prevalent in our community of learning. This is the attitude that whoever does not agree with my/our point of view is wrong, that he is wrong because of mediocrity, ignorance, or Satanic delusion; and that the only way to deal with him is to laugh him to scorn from my/our position of superior intelligence or static but satisfying formulations. Students, professors, and visitors alike have been both victims and perpetrators of this cheap device.

A person may be contemptible or humorously in error about a great many things due to ignorance, carelessness, or deliberate design; but when he is thought to be in error concerning Truth and concerning his eternal relationship to God, his error is never ridiculous or humorous and is never properly the butt of jokes or the object of scorn. On the contrary, such error properly calls forth from him who believes he is more nearly right, a boundless and divine compassion for the soul that is thus seemingly unenlightened. It is inconceivable that a Christian who realizes his own indebtedness to God's divine grace and initiative in His Self-revelation should vaunt himself to laugh at or exhibit contempt for anyone for holding any belief.

This attitude on a seminary campus tends to stifle sincere and honest dialogue between individuals or groups holding different views. It therefore limits the success of the educational endeavor of the entire community by destroying many potentially valuable learning situations both inside and outside the classroom.

A seminary campus ought to be a place where anyone could express any view (old or new) and have it accepted, revised, or rejected in such an atmosphere of love that he does not feel personally humiliated or rejected. Only from this sort of environment will there emerge a responsible grasp of Truth and its relevance to current issues.

....James P. Henson

EDITORIAL

THE SECRETS OF GOD ARE OUT

An aura of indifference and detachment has become increasingly obvious between the hours eleven and twelve on Sunday mornings. The minister gets up to preach, but the congregation, though they listen somewhat attentively, mentally sit down in a kind of stupor. They "sit down" because like Pavlov's dog they have adjusted to their environment, i.e. the relics of by-gone sermons from which they have found nothing particularly urgent to be forthcoming and nothing really meaningful demanded. Why this phenomenon of disinterest? Some of our colleagues feel that this is due to a lack of prophetic preaching; some feel that the minister is not engaging in that which is relevant; and still others feel that the minister is simply not preaching the Bible, or the Word. Allow me to add still another (indeed, it has been said before in other ways) -- namely, "the secrets of God are out."

To the man in the pulpit, in the congregation, or on the street, the God of Christianity to a large degree has been and is a God who fills in the gaps between what a man empirically knows and does not know. Whatever is not known is accredited to the realm and authority of God. According to this mentality, God assumes the status of an overpowering agent who possesses quantitatively greater degrees of ability to perform the miraculous and feats thereof. This idea of God may be given to the desire to have the sun stand still, or to the production of a bumper tobacco crop, or to the correct answer on a church history examination. What results from this kind of thinking is precisely what has occurred in the minds of many; as more and more of these abilities are either discharged or understood by man, God becomes increasingly less and less in significance. (You see, the secrets of God are out!) For example, many of us at one time or another have been in a rain-prayer-meeting. We people of the church were called together to honestly and reverently petition God to send us rain. However, we do very little praying for rain anymore because meteorologists tell us that it only rains when the natural processes of the atmosphere create a condition of vapor condensation. Therefore, consequential to just this type of situation, many have become embarrassingly disillusioned, many have become conscience pacifying spectators, and many others have become pugnacious and fearful fighters defending sacred souvenirs. In any case, this primitive concept of God must be abandoned and its grip must be shaken loose if the cause of the faith is to be anything more than post-Christian.

The basic Christian interpretation of the concept of God is the Biblical supposition that God is Spirit. God is the End, and he is man's "inner-end," i.e. he can be known as the aim, purpose, thus the foundation of a man's life. As the end of our life, we know God to be beyond us, yet in the midst of us--holy and/yet love. The reality of God is from the beginning to the end a spiritual one, so let us not try to degrade him to some super-human level of existence.

Are the secrets of God out? NO! comrade, and this is the decisive and cogent challenge before us all: to somehow articulate this reality of God to the bewildered and meaningless existence of that lethargic congregation.

....D.S.

BEWARE OF GIFTS BEARING GREEKS.....

There are ultimately three questions which confront the student who desires to "pastor." The first is, "should he consider pastoring at all?" The second two presuppose an affirmative answer to the first. "Should he share his changing theological perspectives with his congregation?" "If so, how?" The fact that this discussion centers on the second question neither condones an affirmative answer to the first nor alludes to an easy disposition of the third. It is a practical recognition that student pastors are probably here to stay.

How does the student pastor deal with the breach which generally comes to exist between his own theological perspectives and those of his people? Compounding the complexities of any answer is the existence of a theological pendulum which is characteristic of the life of most congregations who consistently employ student pastors. There is the shift of emphases in congregational life brought about by constant and rapid change of pastors who often represent divergent extremes in theological stance. Because the swing is so radical at times many congregations come to view the student pastor as unstable, i.e. as "our preacher boy." They consequently view any expressed theology which differs from the security of their traditional beliefs with the utmost suspicion.

The answer to our major question is constituted on an individual basis in response to two considerations: (1) the willingness of the student to accept a dual role of fulfilling the total responsibilities of both seminary and congregation; (2) the reasons the student has for accepting a pastorate.

He generally responds to these considerations along one of four basic paths. He may accept neither of the responsibilities in totality and simply blotch through three years of resulting chaos. By so doing he will jeopardize both his personal ministry and that of his congregation. Whatever haphazard "sharing" he does usually will only add to or create new theological confusion.

Or he may refuse to become involved in the problem at all and simply use the congregation as a meal ticket. As a rule he slowly rationalizes his way into this path. He tries hard at first to be a good pastor. Then because of lack of congregational enthusiasm and response or personal financial stress or the pressures of study (or all and more) he drifts into a decision. It is a meal ticket decision expressed in any of various attitudes: i.e. "I'm here primarily to get an education;" or "They aren't going to change anyway;" or "I'll only be here three years...why not live and let live;" or "They are getting more than they are paying for now;" and classically, "I must find out where the people are before I do anything." Of course this last statement could be legitimate except that more often than not the student spends three whole years just "finding out." Then another comes along and takes up the search. Consequently, over a period of years the congregation remains static in understanding while student after student passes their way in holy quest of "where they are" without ever coming to grips with anything except the congregation's pocket book. This kind of student pastor generally salves his conscience by pressing his new, but unexplained, theological understanding into old symbols while his congregation is still hearing the meanings of antiquity. This method of preserving one's prophetic integrity is commonly known as, "Coming in the back door." The results of this path are devastating. The student acquires attitudes and habits of dealing with a congregation and fulfilling his calling which are more than difficult to break in later years.

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But beyond this he has become guilty of using the people of God. He has prostituted the Body by viewing her as a "thing" of self interest. Inwardly he may be cast into a whirlpool of guilt anxieties. However, more important than the student is the effect on the congregation. They sense his aloofness to the basic ministry of the church and procure the attitude for themselves in defensive response. They too begin to see the student as a transient. And if they do not "cotton" to him they can always put up with him for a few years until he leaves. They also may view him as a thing since he is here today and gone tomorrow. What he suggests or preaches is taken with a big grain of salt for they fast acquire his "not going to get involved" viewpoint. They whisper to their friends, "The trouble with our churches is student pastors." And the church is plunged into a type of sterile, prostituted Christianity which sees as its only source of spiritual gratification the providing of itself as a meal ticket for seminary students.

Sometimes the student accepts a pastorate as an opportunity to gain experience and preach. He would be the last person to jeopardize this opportunity by exposing a congregation to new interpretations. And because his attitude is bathed in an ultra-"pioussity," he may never realize that he, too, is using the congregation as a means to a selfish end.

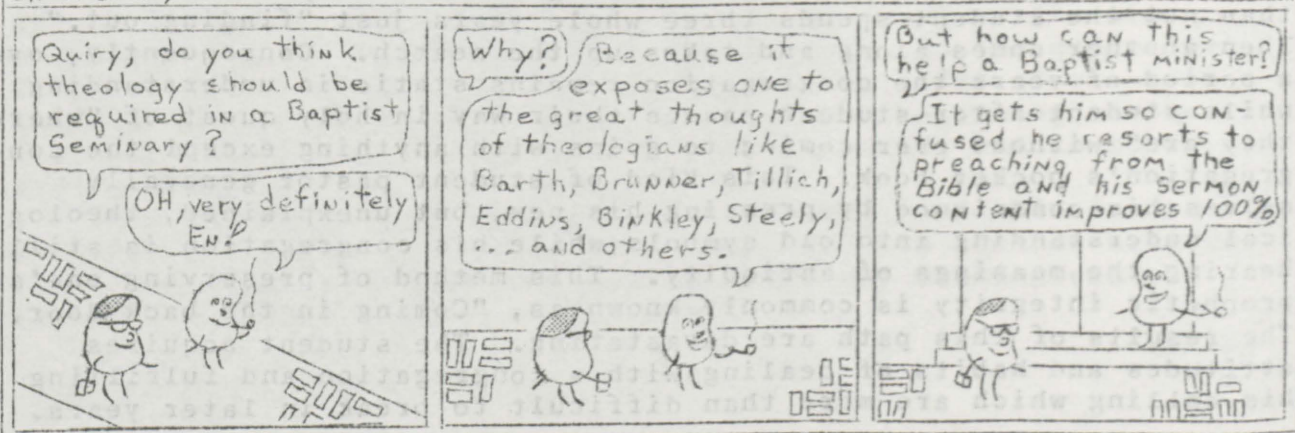
But there is a path of response worthy of the student's prophetic calling. This path demands that he share his theological understanding because it is the attitude of service for the sake of his calling. It is a perspective of the pastorate which elevates congregational needs above ambition and personal interest. It is a refusal to play Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in terms of seminary-congregation relationships. It is the natural outworking of a theology which cannot be confined to the cult of four sanctified days at seminary. At this point the "how" of this sharing comes into view. It is the task of reorienting a people's understanding of the Scripture and meaning of faith. It is not a pressing from the top but from the bottom. It is becoming a part of a succession of student pastors whose goal is to give to that congregation a new foundation upon which they hope some student may eventually be able to build. Down this path the student retains his integrity and the congregation increases in stature.

So beware that you not look upon the church as God's gift to bear the noble scholar through seminary.

....Robert T. Latham

EN & Quiry

by Gene Wallace



ON THE LOOSE END

(A column dedicated to everything not nailed down)

This past week the "Loose End" sent out a roving reporter to obtain student comments concerning current issues and events of importance. Some of these reflected the prevailing attitudes so poignantly we felt that they should be shared with the student body.

Reporter: How do you go about finding God's will in your selection of a church?

Secular Well, the size of the parsonage, gas mileage allowance, Student: vacations, convention allowance, the golf courses available, all these things enter into the decision. And I almost forgot the most important thing--the salary.

Reporter: What is your opinion of the tests given and term papers assigned here at seminary?

Shifty I find them stimulating, challenging, and calculated Student: to encourage the thinking process--Good day, Dr. Steely; how are you?

Reporter: I see you are a graduate student. How long have you been here and when do you expect to finish?

Senile I don't know. I'm due to start drawing my social Security next year. Do you think they'll force me to retire if I'm not through with my thesis by then?

Reporter: What do you consider the most important qualification of a preacher?

Stolid The ability to dialogue in such a way that everyone Student: should be able to know right away immediately what it is he is dialoguing about. That should be his primary role--you know?

Reporter: What do you think of the new school publication "The Enquiry?"

Skeptical It sure ain't the Biblical Recorder, is it?

Student:Jim Fletcher

A postscript on theology:

Of all the disciplines, Systematic Theology is supreme, Barth, Brunner, Tillich, what a team.

Volumes these have written for our minds.

Ideas galore in each book we find.

Doctrines about God in volumes are encased.

But do you think possibly

God
himself
has been misplaced?

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....James S. Perry

JUXTAPOSITION

"The world is too much with us," the laureate Wordsworth claimed: What with the agonizing push for prowess amongst our peers, for popularity, pastoral piety, power, prestige and the promise of prosperity, with a paid-up pension, parsonage, and not the least among the list, a plush pulpit for posterity and the preaching of the parousia--"we lay waste our powers."

Yet, praise be the concern, the seminary campus is not without conscience: What with Sandusky's Simple System (3-S tonic, prescribed in chapel September 25th), a formula for physical prowess and mental agility:

"Twenty minutes of rigorous exercise followed by a brisk jog around the campus taken once a day, guaranteed to 'brighten' the corner where you are."

The following article extends the emphasis. The author, deceptively strong, practices his preaching: Almost every day he methodically and mercilessly pounds a 14 ounce bag to a pulp, manipulates heavy weights (250 plus pounds) with an audacity and nerve that defy description. We hear him gladly.

OUR BODILY TEMPLES: WEAK OR STRONG?

Every afternoon, Monday through Friday, from the basement of Gore Gymnasium there come strange noises as the "bapity-bap" of nylon lined punching bags, the metallic "clank-clank" of weights, the "whap-whap" of the ping pong ball, and upstairs on the basketball court is heard the "swish-swish" of another basketball goal.

To many on campus these may seem to be strange noises indeed, but to a few these noises are familiar and as much a part of their lives as their books. To the few to whom these noises are familiar the equipment which causes these noises are as necessary to their daily existence as three meals.

But the tragedy is that to the greatest percentage of the student body the equipment of our adequately supplied gym is strange and unfamiliar.

Only a small part of the Southeastern Seminary contingent of scholars have taken the Scripture literally that the body is the temple of God (II Cor. 6:16). One only has to gaze on this campus to see some of the poor, run-down, dissipated temples in which the Spirit of a Great and Holy God dwells. Some of these temples, unless they are strengthened in a hurry, will some day resemble the temple at Jerusalem after it was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. Already the destructive forces of physical inactivity are destroying these potentially sound bodily temples. The ministry is no place for the neurotic and the physically inadequate in this space age world of today in which the most strenuous physical and mental demands are made on the minister of God.

The secular world is promoting physical education in a program such as the President's Council on Physical Fitness and in the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Should we who are Christians designate physical exercise to the limbo of the non-essential as far as our preparation for Christian service is concerned?

Worship of God requires the whole man. We are to worship the Almighty with all our minds, all our souls, and all our strength. Does not this mean to worship God with strong bodily temples also?

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Let us use our adequately supplied Gore Gymnasium! The Greeks believed that a sound body was just as essential to study, work, and play as was a sound mind. Moreover, the Greek went to the gymnasium every day. Therefore, let us say, "I was glad when they said to me, let us go to the gym and work out."

.....James Beryl Boswell

P. S. See you at the gym!

.....C.P.

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THE BAPTIST IMAGE ON THE BIBLE BELT WALL

As men of faith we find that it is periodically essential to evaluate one's particular faith tradition. We who have been reared in the Southern Baptist tradition fairly soon learn that we sprang from the womb of an adolescent church. She is the Mother of a large family, too few of whom have ever been off to college.

In recent years, Southern Baptists have basked in their reputation of reaching more people than any other Protestant denomination. Our church rolls have thrived, especially in the Bible Belt, but by and large we have concentrated on numbers. Very few ever ask anything more than "How many members do you have?" We have been head over heels at work building an institution with a growing membership and a declining influence. "Membership" is a decision to join an institution whose chief goal is to produce more of the same. We feel cheated when we realize that some fly by night evangelist has hooked us with a high pressure "gospel trick," and who by the process of pure repetition has drilled into our brain a localized, bigoted picture of the church. All a man needs to do is to "accept Christ," and with the glib utterance of that powerful admonition, the evangelist too often offends the educated and merely hooks the simple man. Church rolls are gods of our denomination, even if we cannot find one-fourth of those who have blessed our records and then left us shortly thereafter. We train people to keep records, even to the point where records going out to associations, state and convention authorities take precedence over Sunday morning worship. Mr. Baptist has made the mistake a poet saw in another age: "For tender minds, he served up half a Christ." We can be fairly certain that we are reaching people, but we need to ask, "With what?"

Our predominant proclamation is a diluted version of Christian gospel made to fit a denominational mold. We are promoting a cheap evangelism which buys no stock in the social implications of the Gospel of Christ. We have poured the Biblical concept of evangelism into a revivalistic mold which has no "rub." Our Southern Baptist gospel no longer has a scandal in this world of real social issues. Lately, the federal government has done more to establish the dignity of every man than the Southern Baptist Convention, especially when it is in session. We have been preaching in the South too long to change now, for we have called sinners to Christ without social repentance. Bonhoeffer calls this cheap grace. There is nothing that can disturb us or uproot anything that really matters. We have adopted the slogan: "Blessed are the sleek for they shall never be ruffled."

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There is an old Baptist belief that says each person is competent and responsible under God. This implies a freedom to which preachers and laymen alike give vocal adherence, but in practice it is often another matter. We bend people and churches to fit a denominational pattern by which anyone can be assured to be Christian. We insist on conformity. When a single church tries something "non-Baptist," how many associations are there who run to correct the misguided child? When a seminary professor writes a controversial book, a local pressure group gives him the ax, not because these ideas are wrong, but seemingly because we believe in "controlled ignorance." Someone has said that there is a great heresy loose in our convention; it is the belief that the truth may hurt someone. We are afraid for people to know the truth because they would become free and that might even mean our co-operative efforts would be questioned. The prevailing tendency of our leadership at all levels is the appeasing and expedient attitude, "Don't rock the boat!"

Some of these things seem amply destructive alone. But, there is still another matter of concern. A large family is all right if the members are humble enough to listen to each other; however, this too is not our fortune. Even certain kinds of conformity would not be too bad if there were tolerance for those of other groups. But, combine this with our Southern Baptist superiority complex, and you have both a family quarrel and a community scandal on your hands. How many influential Baptists have had to swallow their words of condemnation of a Roman Catholic President? You have to go a long way before you find more pride and arrogance than you can find in our family.

There are many who would say that these are not powerful forces in our denomination. However, this observation is likely due to the fact that they have never tried to oppose these forces, for to oppose our tradition is costly. But it must be opposed at those points where the mission of the Church is distorted, if not destroyed. While we certainly honor our Mother Church, we must in integrity try to outgrow our rearing. We could hope to grow up into a maturity spoken of in Ephesians as the "fullness of Christ."

....Bob Phillips

"The Enquiry" Staff

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If this student publication is to serve its proper function, it is absolutely essential that you as part of the seminary community participate. When you read an article which arouses your interest, respond with a "Letter to the Editor." Also, you are invited to submit thought-provoking concerns that you may have which would be of general interest to our community.

....The Editors

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

October

- 14--Sons of the Prophets, Bethea Room, 6:00 p.m.
- 15--Fellowship Club, Bethea Room, 8:00 p.m.
- 20--Missions Emphasis Group, Bethea Room, 7:00 p.m.
- 22--"Inherit the Wind," Gymnasium, 8:00 p.m.
- 27--WMS General Meeting, Little Chapel, Appleby, 8:00 p.m.
- 30--Fellowship Club Halloween Fan Fare, Community House, 7:30 p.m.

Admission: 50¢ per family or couple plus costume.
Awards will be given for most original male, female, family, and child's costume.
Entertainment: costume parade, pumpkin pineyatta breaking, races, hootenanny, with special entertainment for the kids.
Everybody is welcomed.

October

- 15--Dr. Rowland Crowder, Baptist Sunday School Board
- 16--Mr. J. Carroll Trotter
- 20--Mr. James E. Tull
- 21--Dr. Herbert C. Jackson, Director, Missionary Research Library, New York, New York
- 22--Chaplain William R. Steininger, Dorothea Dix Hospital, Raleigh, North Carolina
- 23--Dr. Joe Burton, Editor, Home Life Magazine
- 27--Miss Thelma Arnote
- 28--Dr. T. Marvin Vick, Jr., Pastor of Edenton Street Methodist Church, Raleigh, North Carolina
- 29--Student Co-ordinating Council
- 30--Mr. James H. Blackmore

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Please bring announcements to "The Enquiry" office, 208 Appleby.

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"POLITICAL TALKS" HELD ON CAMPUS

With the hope of quickening social responsibility and enlightening the members of the seminary, political talks are being given for the month of October in the seminary cafeteria from 10:30 to 10:50. It is hoped that from these talks given by fellow students, faculty, and outside guest speakers, our student body will be assisted in making their choice for President of the United States. During the next two weeks there will also be periods for open discussion from 4:00 to 5:00.

During the week of October 7-9 general opening statements were made by students who support the candidates. Wednesday was devoted to brief statements of personal reasons for backing Johnson and Goldwater. Thursday broad statements were made concerning the two candidates' foreign policies.

This week will be devoted to more specific topics such as the two positions on nuclear weapons, Viet Nam, civil rights, centralization of government, the national budget, and other issues.

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INTRAMURAL FOOTBALL

The first three games played by Southeastern Intramural teams have resulted as follows:

- Derrick Davis's team--7; Randy Rankin's team--0
- Davis's team--28; Rucker Burnette's team--19
- Burnette's team--7; Rankin's team--6

Games are played every Tuesday and Thursday at 4:00 p.m. in the stadium. Those interested in playing may contact any team captain.

HE THAT TROUBLETH HIS OWN HOUSE...

The infamous Scopes "monkey trial" in Dayton, Tennessee, commanded the attention of the nation, and provoked the greatest reporters and historians of the day to write millions of words describing and interpreting the collision between Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan that fateful summer of 1925, but nothing more powerful than the play, "Inherit the Wind," by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee.

The issues raised in this drama are real issues even today; and no one who can recall the Elliott controversy that rocked the Southern Baptist Convention--1962, not 1925--can say they are not relevant for the seminary campus. As the authors say, "'Inherit the Wind' does not pretend to be journalism. It is theatre. It is not 1925. The stage directions set the time as 'Not too long ago.' It might have been yesterday. It could be tomorrow."

The Seminary Players will present "Inherit the Wind" at Southeastern on October 22. The cast of more than thirty includes Bob Phillips as Matthew Harrison Brady and Bob Lovell as Henry Drummond. It is directed by J. F. Chappell, and produced by the S.C.C. Drama Committee, Carol Winfield, Chairman.

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WHY MISSIONS EMPHASIS GROUP?

The Missions Emphasis Group is for everyone who is interested in and concerned about missions. Briefly, the objectives in emphasizing missions are: 1) to encourage prayer for missions and missionaries; 2) to confront persons with the task of missions in a changing world; 3) to work to stimulate interest and concern about the Missionary Days and Student Missions Conferences on campus; 4) to keep before each one that missions are important in God's plan for the world.

The sponsor of the group is Dr. Copeland. The officers are as follows: president, James Beryl Boswell; vice-president, John Singletary; secretary, Ed Middleton; publicity, Gerald Bryson; social chairman, Mamie Lundsford.

Many students have expressed the desire for the seminar type of learning situation in which they can ask questions and receive answers. This is the type of program offered at Mission Group meetings. Meetings are being held this year on the Tuesday night preceeding the Missionary Days which are scheduled on Wednesdays by the Seminary. This is being done with the purpose of using Missionary Day speakers as discussion leaders. The next meeting is October 20.

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WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY NEWS

Mrs. Foy Farmer, former missionary to Japan, and Miss Kathryn Bullard, the North Carolina WMS director, will be special guests during the next general meeting of the campus Women's Missionary Society on Tuesday, October 27. The WMS will also hear plans presented by Mrs. Richard Bass, mission study chairman, for the fall mission study book, Frontiers of Advance, to be taught by its author, Dr. E. Luther Copeland, professor of missions, at 7:45 p.m., November 2, at the Rolesville Baptist Church. Students' wives and women students are invited to attend WMS meetings.