

Well?!

The Modest Newsletter as the Organ of *Gravitas*

Visions of Order

I really don't feel that I have enough information concerning this matter or a clear understanding of the precise question Joel is asking, so I won't be able to give a worthwhile opinion, but here it is.

Personally, I do like the status quo, but I realize the advantages of organization. I would like a very loose organization, if possible... the less, the better (at least at this point so we can try it and see what happens).

Deborah

My idea:

Regarding incorporation

At the last meeting, given the stated goals, I said, "Let's incorporate." And to meet those goals, I still think incorporation is one necessary step. However, with the warm glow of our discussion a distant memory, I find myself lukewarm about those goals, and certainly not committed to an incorporation effort. I like the loose-knit nature of our group, and definitely see it as a "Central Seminary" activity. In fact, it would be most unfortunate if this became a decidedly "un-Central" activity, given its potential positive influence on many students to come. Barring official recognition by the seminary as an extracurricular activity, allowing us to invoke the "Central" name when reserving meeting facilities, etc., I desire no substantial change to the status quo. Therefore, I retract my recommendation to incorporate at this point.

Thanks,

Todd

Some Disputations by Ericus Whiticus

I believe, Joel, through some conversations that this question may need to be clarified. It seems we are talking about organization on two levels. One is a local campus chapter of a larger organization; the other is the larger organization. This distinction seems to leave us with three options: 1) we not organize more than we have; 2) we can become a local chapter of a grander organization which at this time does not exist; 3) because we are the first local chapter we would temporarily become both the grand organization and the local chapter.

Am I clear on these distinctions?¹

¹You are at least, eminently Dispensational and Scholastical. These are very admirable questions but conspicuous by their absence are any opinions.

The Rather Impressive Contribution of Andrea

Regarding incorporation: it seems that nobody in this loosely organized group of friends has the time to pursue incorporation at this point, and it is my opinion that such a step is currently unnecessary and premature. However, we do need a group name and some chief organizers so that we will be able to take advantage of public meeting places for bashes and possibly retreats. And that is why we decided last month (at least I'm pretty sure we did) that we would call ourselves *Gravitas* and that we would have three secretaries. Now it is up to us secretaries to get cracking on locating a space for a retreat for next summer, and if it turns out that we really do need to incorporate in order to rent space for a retreat, then it will be the secretaries' job to address that issue. But let's cross that bridge when we come to it, and stick with a loose organization for now.

I feel very strongly that this group should not seek recognition as an official extracurricular activity from Central Seminary, nor should we try to use the name "Central" when referring to the group. Becoming an official extracurricular will, I think, deter non-Central students from taking part in our bashes. Perhaps this will not be intentional, but it will happen in the same way that the name "Central Women's Fellowship" deters women who are not students at Central, nor married to Central students, from taking part in its meetings. We are serious about the life of the mind, and would welcome any serious Christian who is interested in culture and the life of the mind.

I agree with Todd, that this group should never attempt to become "un-Central." I truly hope that there will be some more Central students who are interested in the things we talk about in this year's incoming class. We should never try to alienate Central students after we are gone from the area, and should try to exert as much positive influence there as possible. However, we should not attempt to limit the group to Central students. All serious Christians must deal with culture, and there are many serious Christians who do not attend Central Seminary or Fundamental Baptist churches. I think we should welcome them, because there aren't many groups within Evangelicalism devoted to these issues, and perhaps we could encourage them and help them as much as we could help Central students.

The Rather Impressive Contribution of Joel

What can we make out of *Gravitas*? I think that we should see if we can dream of a book service. I do not mean this in the way my wife usually takes these things. Usually, when I make a statement like this I mean to gradually work toward it and not to immediately undertake the commotion of actually brining the thing about. But would it not be good to have a good and worthwhile² way to get books? Of course, it is really superfluous in a city like ours where we have such an abundance of excellent book stores and besides that the internet. But it still seems like something desirable. For the young seminary students we could have commentaries since they are so enthusiastic about commentaries. For the sake of appearances we could carry some intellectual stuff of one sort or another. But the real thing would be to band together to get ourselves nice editions of the LXX or the Vulgate; to get ourselves, most cunningly, this or that edition³ of this or that specific

²It is some editors folly to think these two terms are synonyms.

³I do not mean by this the pernicious habit of those who have degenerated into mere collectors of books. Death to the view that one must have collectors editions and leather bound gimmickry and all matching sets. I am talking about the right edition in terms of the content. Not

book; to purchase for ourselves essential reading or essential listening at prices that are equally essential. Wouldn't you think that would leave us very pleased with ourselves? I do.

Another idea that has occurred to me is straight out of G. K. Chesterton. In one of the Father Brown stories that I don't understand and therefore dislike, there is a rather pleasing scene of an annual banquet for something or other. I think it would be great to have an annual banquet. Not an annual gesture at a banquet such as the Dinner Date at Central is. But one in a good place with good tables and chairs and good silverware and china⁴ and worthwhile food, a regular feast. Then we could sing *Now Thank We All Our God* and eat and afterwards listen to a good (short and interesting⁵) speech, and maybe congratulate ourselves or something that would leave us feeling very pleased with ourselves and heartily glad that we went.

I do think that we should put serious effort into thinking about where we are going to meet if we are going to continue with high numbers. Perhaps that will not be our fate, but if it is then we need to get a place to meet in comfortably. I would very much dislike a bash that is too uncomfortable. This is really my main concern with organization. I would hate to give up the comfortable surroundings we enjoy (although some have been so heretical as to have bashes without coffee). One would be loath to meet at a place where food was forbidden for that is a rooted and established keystone to the heart and soul of the bash.

A Rather Brilliant Summation of all the Contributions by Joel

It is pretty evident that quite a few people took Todd seriously when he spoke of incorporation, including Todd himself! Well, that is all over with now, and by common consent. Nobody is willing to expend the effort, at least among those who were willing enough to expend the effort to contribute, and we may therefore safely conclude that whatever effort is expended, we would rather expend it on exegeting the writings of Eric who is full of grand schemes that have subcategories and finely distinguished derivations, all this while we pondered incorporation. Since that last sentence went of in a quite unexpected direction and didn't quite accomplish that which it set out to accomplish, I see that I will have to make another go at it. What I set out to say was that it does not seem that those who show interest are really interested in any radical changes. Eric of course, just wanted to ask questions, a habit he has developed by teaching Sunday school, all of which is excellent. So as not to miss the

that it is bad to have durable editions, just that it is bad and hardly worthwhile to practice the wasteful habit of collecting books for the sake of their covers or the circumstances of their printing exclusively, or because they come in a set and you like the look of it even though you will never in your entire life read the whole of the works of John Owen though you console yourself with the notion that one day it might be useful, which is utterly vain and, moreover, frivolous.

⁴What is more deplorable than disposable eating-off-of-stuff? I can go to McDonald's and get better food with the same deplorable surroundings. I like china, I like cloth napkins, I like servants – I could write a whole article on how nice it would be to have servants. Maybe we could somehow figure out a way, through *Gravitas*, to get ourselves servants?

⁵It is almost redundant except that sometimes long speeches can be interesting, but not usually. They usually have to be short and preferably funny, but not pathetically funny. Some people don't realize that most humor is like fireworks and they set fire to the spent shell and think the burning of that is on the same scale as the worthwhile explosion before.

mark of conciseness toward which this summation must aim, it is my cheerful duty at this point to bring to a close this section of the newsletter by reminding you that any further opinions will be gladly entertained. But I think we have the general tenor of the populace who is ert enough to respond. The general opinion seems to be that we just keep doing what we are doing and not trouble ourselves greatly over anything that is going to be more than modest in its ambition. All of this is excellent to me. I rather hoped to prove a point simply by pointing out the percentage of those who were asked for an opinion compared to the percentage of those who responded, which as I have been struggling throughout this summation to indicate, indicates something.⁶ Hopefully we can emerge from this morbidly introspective stage and quit thinking about ourselves and quit worrying about having a name and settle the worrisome issue of whether we will be comfortable or not and go on to grander things!⁷

Some Items of Business

We ought to think about what we want to do with this idea of a retreat. How is the enthusiasm for this? What can we hope for? What do people want to do? Where will we do it and all that. I propose that the secretaries come up with a list of options to present to the rest of the people to see if we can wrest some opinions out of them and find out what can and cannot be done. There should be a meeting of the secretaries for this purpose, a meeting for a nice brunch, perhaps, with good coffee so that some serious thinking can be done.

We once dreamed of a sort of journal of our best stuff and I dream of it still - when I am not dreaming of having more of you contribute to the Modest Newsletter. You really ought to undertake the discipline of writing, perhaps somebody could contribute an essay on the salutary effects of writing something that is interesting. Here is your opportunity to write something that you can put before other people and I assure you, the criticism is not harsh, if you fear that. This is good for your literacy and let us not be people to congratulate ourselves on our literacy before we are truly literate. We are mere dwarfs when it comes to our abilities to communicate and are so much the worse for having lost so much of that exquisite art of civilization, the art of literacy. It is an art that above all God seems to delight in cultivating in those who are especially close to him, it seems to me. And really, any reasons that you can think of for not contributing to the Newsletter are most assuredly stupid or entirely, if unconsciously, based on your laziness and that is not the sort of person that you should be. Don't be stupid or lazy, be literate.

Come with ideas for the next bash. I have a few written down but the real issue is who is going to do the next one. Consider what you would like to talk about and consider how you could lead a discussion of what you would like to talk about and then consider informing those concerned.

⁶Lest anybody say that the solicitation was obscure let me point out that Todd and Andrea got it without asking and only going on the original solicitation. Folks, *Todd* got it! We're not talking about Arvo Part here.

⁷Please feel free to write to the Editor anytime. We welcome disputes, I am not trying to quell the argument but merely, as I have mentioned it before, to sum it up - of course my opinion is included, but that is only fair considering the heroic effort that when into my bit of contribution. Do you think that I just come up with these things sitting here looking at the uninspiring monitor of a computer, an object completely devoid of all aesthetic value? I do not.