

# Table Talk

News and Views of the  
Student Body of The Lutheran  
Theological Seminary at Gettysburg.



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## The Incarnation and Spirituality



As we enter upon this Christmas season, we who are engaged in the task of the Church's theology need to carefully reflect on the radical nature of the proclamation of the incarnation of Christ. Among those topics radically affected by the incarnation is that of Christian spirituality. The following is an outline of a hypothesis for the reworking of this locus.

The proclamation of the Christmas event of incarnation is the very heart of the gospel: God has become human in the man Jesus. Whatever God might have been, it is now irrevocably the case that there is no God apart from Jesus; humanity not only stands in the presence of God, but now is united with God precisely in the humanity which we and God share. And so communication with God is a possibility, because God

is embodied in a human way, just like us.

The incarnate Jesus is also the dead and risen Jesus, and these two events cannot be separated. As risen Lord, Jesus possesses ubiquity, so that his body is now whatever he says is his body. And in baptism he declares that it is the presence of persons baptized into the body of Christ -- the community of the Church -- that Christ is bodily present; God has a body, and it is us. Which means that it is in the communication of the persons who are that body that communication with God occurs.

And that has radical impact upon Christian spirituality. It means primarily that there is no such thing as "inner spirituality," God within, in my heart, etc. God has a human body; God is to be found in the external intercourse between fleshly individuals, and nowhere else. Wherever else God might be is not revealed to us.

Which means that all true spirituality must take place in external, inter-personal interaction. The important thing about spirituality is corporate worship and life, and not private devotions. Indeed, private devotions are in no way worship or spiritual, but are preparation for the true spirituality of corporate worship and life. Therefore, private devotions should take the form of reading Scripture and significant Christian literature, meditating on those texts for future reference. Private prayer is a denial of the incarnation. God is located in his body, the Church; prayer, being discourse with God, ought properly to be addressed to the bodily presence of God, just as any true discourse is addressed to the bodily presence of another, and not simply spoken out into nowhere; wherever God might be, he is present to me only where he is bodily presented to me. Therefore, prayer should be restricted to corporate worship and other public gatherings of Christians (e.g., family or refectory meals).

(continued on page 3)



And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

St. Luke 11.1-16. (KJV)

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## THE INCARNATION AND SPIRITUALITY (from page 1)

Because we as the Church are the body of Christ, life itself is worship, and so is spirituality. Our bodies are the space in the world where God meets and addresses the world, because our bodies together are God's body. Our spirituality is thus a matter of how we address the world as "the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor 12:27).

It is to be concluded, then, that the Christmas event of the incarnation of God as Jesus is the end of all internalization and privatization of any facet of the Christian life, be it faith, piety, or worship. Spirituality, therefore, must be an exclusively corporate concern of the body of Christ, focusing itself on a life directed towards others, and never introspectively upon oneself. The radicality of this is sweeping, and shakes the whole foundation of traditional spiritual piety. And that is probably for the best.

-Mark E. Chapman

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## SOME THOUGHTS...

When the most recent issue of TABLE TALK came out, many members of our community had some very negative reactions to the "dear John" letter which appeared. I must admit, I, too felt somewhat disturbed. Although the noise in the chapel before services could be seen as a sign of "disrespect", I told myself it was rather a symptom of a very friendly person oriented community, one in which settings of worship were not seen as opportunities for any of us to show our "holier-than-thou" pietistic attitude but rather as a gathering of friends to worship the Lord. Having consoled myself with that rationalization I continued on my merry way fully enjoying the spirit of "community" here on the hill. Then came the very rude awakening. Scene: The Thanksgiving Meal at the Refectory. Plot: to enjoy an exquisitely prepared turkey dinner. Actors and Actresses: The seminary community. I had very little difficulty accepting either the stage upon which the drama was to unfold or the participants involved. However. Given the title of the "Drama" I couldn't help but walk away from the Refectory that night thoroughly disenchanted with the so-called "Christian community". Thanksgiving, to most of us, is a family time. The friends and relationships which we have built here on the hill have actually become our extended families. The friendly atmosphere at the meal was obvious. But there was something else also sadly "Obvious". Where was our community's expression of gratitude to God. Have we all forgotten that although individual table graces and silent prayer are in no way inappropriate, the occasion of a formal meal such as Thanksgiving could have, afforded us a valuable chance to express our gratitude to God, as a "group". We are seemingly obsessed with the idea of constantly relocating the crucifix in the chapel in order to outwardly demonstrate that God is everywhere. Think about it - what better way do we have to show that exact same thing by showing the presence of Christ within our daily lives. Friends - we blew it at Thanksgiving!

I cannot help but sit here and ask how can we, each one of us, sit here diligently preparing ourselves to become professional church workers and yet so deliberately "Disconnect" the things we are learning from the feelings in our hearts. The ministry, whether it be in the role of a D.C.E. or the ordained clergy, is not like any other job. Indeed, to me it is not a vocation but a lifestyle. What's happening to our's?

Yours in Christ,

Sandy Lehr



When I returned from CPE this past September I was quite excited. I was anxious to see my classmates and to see how CPE had affected them. I was anxious to meet the returning interns and incoming juniors. New classes, a new football season, and my office of Student Association President all added to this excitement, and indeed I was sky high when the school year finally began. The academic year 1930-31 seemed full of bright promises and future rewards; there were few dismal notes. As the year continued so did my hopefulness for this year. The seniors appeared to be full of joy and their happy-go-lucky attitude seemed to spread contagiously. The juniors appeared to be full of inner potential, many coming to Seminary due to personal crisis, many trying to display their potential as pastors by wearing clerics whenever possible. Their academic life amazed me - they all seemed bright, but they also had fun as was seen in Dr. Myers' birthday party. I still regarded my own class as one possessing a large group of future pastors, of people who will minister capably with love through Christ. Last year's high/low church controversy had disappeared.

Recently there has been a noticeable change in the campus atmosphere. The enthusiasm of the beginning of the year has disappeared. Complaints have circulated through the campus about worship and chapel attendance, the internship process and CPE interviews, articles in TABLE TALK, lack of social activities and the price of board in the Refectory. Complaints and conflict are inevitable in a community of independent and educated people such as this. Indeed, discussions and controversy are healthy, BUT ONLY if dealt with in the right way. So, instead of griping and complaining, do something about the issue troubling you. Deal with the cause of the problem (whether a person or a situation) yourself. If you want a party on Friday night, have one. If you want better articles in TABLE TALK, write one. If you have problems with the internship or CPE processes, talk to the Field Education faculty. It is not another's responsibility, but yours! If you cannot deal with the problem, then approach one of your student representatives, that is why you voted for them. We would not need student rep's if, in Dean Krodel's words, everything was "hunkey-dunky".

At this writing one of my pet peeves has been the price of board in the refectory. (This article was written before the decision to raise the board by \$20.00.-ed.) I'll take this opportunity to practice my own preaching. Personally I feel that we need to raise the board by \$20.00. This is what the Refectory Board recommended. We voted for them, and should trust them. To raise the board by only \$10.00 would not cover our expenses. If by raising the board \$20.00 we come up with a financial surplus, this money might either be redirected into the co-op or be used for World Hunger. It is true that some of us miss more meals than others, or eat less than others, but can you imagine the administrative headache that scaling board charges according to these variables would create? Would you want to administer such a system? If not, it would be unfair to make someone else do so. Besides, to do so would be to destroy the whole concept of a co-op. We are a community and therefore are concerned with the community. Individual needs are not forgotten, but are met by the community. I'm sure that if the extra cash is too much of a burden, something can be arranged.

Enough, my burden has been made public. Can you, will you do the same?

Yours,  
Dick Geib

To: THE COMMUNITY

From: Harold O. Jacobson

In order for this article/letter to have any benefit, either to you or me, it must be discussed openly and I must receive feedback.

In writing this I was faced with a problem incurred when I attempt to address the community of which I am a member. For in addressing the community, as such, I exclude no one, not even myself. Whatever injunctions I address to the community I address to myself likewise - for I cannot see myself in any other way than in community. While this is addressed to the community, its specific implications can only be viewed by the individual as you are self-addressed. With regards to these specific implications and arising concerns, I am available for discussion. What this letter is, is a call to conversation, not gossip.

The issue that has prompted this letter is a dangerous undercurrent of what I will call third-person discourse - conversations that do no more than talk about someone or someone's actions. Such speech as this is not only malicious it is community destroying. When we speak in terms of a third person we are in effect saying that that person does not for us exist, we have robbed them of their ability to speak or act on their own. We, in effect, have put words into their mouths or actions with their person. "So and so meant such and such when they said..." Such talk creates a "community" of objects and as such cannot be a community. For we are called into community in that we become subjects to each other. That is, we are called into community in that we communicate with and to each other not about each other. I can experience who I am only in that you talk to me about who you view me to be. By speaking in terms of the third person you rob me of the opportunity to experience and understand myself - and you rob yourself of any possibility to experience yourself through me.

There is an increase of this type of discourse this year in relation to my previous two years, and its prevalence has increased in the last month or so. We as a community are throwing around ecclesiastical tags upon each other, irrespective of whether such titles are merited or even relevant. Such phrases as "holier than thou", "high/low church", "pious", "works righteous chapel attendance keepers", etc... are personality depriving phrases. There is no way that such labels can be other than third-person discourse.

If there is to be community - and that is what our baptism calls us into - then all such discourse should be relegated to the deceased. If you have a problem with me I have the right to hear it from you not through the grapevine, if at all.

As an educational community this becomes an imperative. We are here to engage those who have experienced the type of ministry for which we are still preparing for in conversation. If you say that Dr. so and so said such and such without asking him/her whether that is so then you never heard them in the first place, you only were listening.

In that we confess the Apostles' Creed as our creed of faith we identify ourselves as participating members of that community and tradition that we call Christian. As participants we are called to that function which sets us apart namely the worship of the Triune God. The only place where the entire community comes together in worship is at chapel. We experience Christ only through each other so it is important if not imperative that we all gather together as one body. This seminary's Christian witness as a community occurs only in that we gather together for worship and witness to each other and to those outside of this community that Jesus is Lord.

If we do not come together to worship then the parenthetical use of the word community - at least as a Christian community - is merited. In that our talk becomes increasingly third-person discourse we forfeit the label of community altogether. For to be in community means to be in communion, to be in communication with each other, as subjects not objects. We call ourselves a Christian community, let us live as such, for the only way I can witness to my faith is to you - please don't rob me of this opportunity.

I was asked tonight, at the Core Committee meeting, to write an article, poem, or letter for this issue of TABLE TALK. The purpose behind this writing, of course, was to set an example and to serve as inspiration for others to write. I must admit, however, that I am not sure of which approach to take.

Should I be extremely radical and chastize the community for practicing individual piety and private charity? Certainly not. For this attitude would put me in a position outside of the community, as an unattached observer, attacking from my own individual pietistic outlook. I would be guilty by my own condemnation.

Maybe I should just thank everyone here for being so nice, warm, caring, sincere, and so helpful and supportive of all the activities and programs that go on in this community? I fear not. For then I would be a liar, which does not sit well with me and is not being honest with you.

The problem for me, in addressing the community, is that I realize that I too am a member of it. So, while I am addressing you, I am, at least in part, addressing myself. I know from first hand experience, that I am not always likable, let alone lovable. I know that while I try hard to achieve, I am sometimes lazy and apathetic. And while I have tried with some enthusiasm to start new relationships and strengthen old ones, I have somehow managed to alienate many potential relationships, and broken already existing ones and to those who know, I apologize. But being a member of this community means that I am not alone. I am not alone in my floundering, questioning, offending, nor in my need to hear the Gospel, the assurance of salvation, and forgiveness of my sins.

Herein rests the key to addressing this community. Left completely to ourselves, we may not wish to have certain people as members of our community, as is witnessed by the many sub-groups on campus. But this is not our community. We are not the center of it, nor the lord of it.

What makes this community unique, to all of the other social and secular communities that we have or may belong to, is that this is a community of faith. A faith that is centered on the Christ, whose birth we celebrate this month, whose presence unites and strengthens us, and whose coming we joyously await. It is Christ, the center of this community, who makes it possible for us to love and forgive those, who of our own accord, we find it difficult to accept. It is fitting that the Christ child be laid in the center of the nativity scene, with all of the eyes of the on lookers focused on Him. For it is the Christ event that is the center of faith, calling together into community, Jews, Gentiles, wisemen, shepherds, social outcasts, children, angels and even sometimes unlovable seminarians.

Now, with this introduction, I want to wish you all a very joyous and merry Christmas.

Sincerely,  
Glenn McWilliams

## CHAPEL BENEVOLENCES...

To those of you who may be interested in where the money that you give in your Wednesday offering goes, or to those of you who do not contribute for fear the money may be going to the PTL Club, here is the latest report on financial matters from the Worship Committee.

Last October (1979) a sub-committee on finances was organized to facilitate a more expediant distribution of benevolence monies. At the time a list of priorities was drawn up to guide in that task. It was the sub-committee's feeling that organizations and programs within the Gettysburg-Adams County area should receive the highest priority. This decision was made in light of the fact that these programs rely on the Seminary as a major portion of their income and if we were to cut back our giving these organizations would suffer greatly much more than some of the nationwide organizations. Our next priority dealt with the Lutheran organizations both those covered by other LCA benevolences and those not. Included within the parameters of this priority include: Strength for Mission, World Hunger, and the supporting synods. Our final priority concerns those organizations outside of the Lutheran tradition and also those outside of the United States.

This year's sub-committee on finance is made up of: Jeff May and Connie Wilson (Worship Committee members-at-large), Dr. Richard Thulin (Committee chairperson), and Harold "Jake" Jacobson (Committee treasurer). Any concerns or organizations that you would like brought before the sub-committee please submit a request in writing to any of the above members.

To date (Dec. 8) the following monies have been allocated; \$150. to the YMCA Building Fund (Worship Committee Auction), \$150. to the Adams County Family Counseling Services, \$100. to a Vietnamese Refugee Family in the area who was in emergency financial straits, \$350. to the LCA World Hunger Appeal, and \$180 to the Seminary's Hong Kong Orphan. A special offering was also collected (on December 10) to benefit the families of two recent graduates who were placed under severe financial burdens due to premature births in their families.

As you can see your money is being spent in a worthwhile manner. The funds have been helpful if not crucial to some of the organizations and concerns. If there are any questions regarding the financial matters and/or concerns and requests feel free to ask me or any of the other members of the sub-committee. To those who have given faithfully through the semester, thank you; to those of you who do not give, now that you see where the money goes perhaps you wish to reevaluate your policy.

Harold O. Jacobson

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## LOOKING AHEAD...

Would you be seriously interested in a January term course in January, 1982 centering around a visit to the Kolnonia Partners Farm, near Americus, Georgia? (It's not too far from Plains, if you remember that locale.) A spiritually oriented, practical, tough group of Christians has been operating there since the 1940's. Surviving attempts by bombs, guns and violence of other sorts from the surrounding white community to oust them, they have continued to give witness to their faith. Today they are engaged in agriculture, crafts, and building houses for the poor on land that is really free from the taint of prejudice.

Clarence Jordan, most famous for his Cotton Patch translation of parts of the New Testament, was a co-founder and guiding spirit in the venture. His wife survived him, and is still very much a part of Kolnonia. You can read the story of Kolnonia in The Cotton Patch Evidence, a copy of which is in our library. Also, Mr. Bream has received newsletters over the years which you may look at.

Kolnonia welcomes small groups for up to two weeks. Visitors work, worship and converse with the people of Kolnonia. If a group of at least six committed students wants to take part in such a venture, we will go in January, 1982. Since many visitors come to Kolnonia, reservations need to be made far in advance. They are filled up for January 1981.

Contact Mr. Bream, 4-6286, ext. 31.