

Table Talk

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



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L.T.S.G. *a story*

by Roger Steiner

Little Tabitha Sue Gett was disturbed by the things she saw in her community. She had grown up learning and loving the scriptures, trying to live out the Bible's message as best she could. But it was very difficult to do, and now her community made it even more difficult.

Tabitha was sick and tired of the rumors and the stories she heard while visiting the campus. She had heard the complaints and the snide remarks toward other people. She saw the uncaring attitudes of some toward others and the games that people played so that they could get whatever they wanted -- at any cost. This attitude had invaded just about every aspect of seminary life as far as she could see, resulting in pain and discomfort among many, if not all. She could only remember Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 20-26. She was suffering. What had happened to the love that was spoken and "acted out" at every Eucharist? Did it not go beyond the walls of the chapel?

In some ways she was disillusioned as to what the purpose of seminary was. Seminary is the place where those called by God learn what it means to live out the Gospel, brought to humanity through the holy Word of God in people and in the Bible, so that God's will is carried on into the future. This includes book learning and exegetical interpretation as well as field work and clinical experience. But all this is nothing unless the command to love and care for God and one's neighbor is not strived for. So far, Tabitha Sue had seen little evidence of this. Nobody, not even herself, had been able to fully live out this command, and this bothered her. If it bothered her in her emotions, then it must bother others in theirs. She did not know what to say or do.

At long last, Tabitha Sue decided to see her pastor. She explained what she saw on campus and her feelings toward it all. The pastor probed a little deeper and found out that the faculty were also a part of the problem, either directly or indirectly, often without their knowledge. Her interpretation of Tabitha's story was that academia had become a world unto itself, separated from the world in which people were called to minister. That which brought life to the world inside and outside seminary was only a tool for learning which was picked apart and studied. This Book of Life needed to be studied, but it also needed to be lived out.

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L.T.S.G., continued

The pastor told Tabitha it appeared that the interest in studying the Bible could be overpowering the need for people to experience the love and hope that God's Word affords for all people.

In some cases it seemed that those pages in the Bible which were explored and not liked were torn out and thrown away, never to exist or to have existed. Tabitha asked if the command to love, with all its trials, tribulations, and joys could be so demanding that people are willing to throw it out.

The pastor replied that it could be a possibility, but hoped that this wasn't the case. If people did, then the Bible would be awfully thin by now and the seminary would be a horrible place to live because of damaged relationships.

By this time, both the pastor and Tabitha were perplexed by the situation, and very disturbed.

The pastor was hurt by the fact that this was happening all over the place, inside and outside seminary. Her problem, along with Tabitha's was how does one go about communicating this distressing feeling and addressing the problem.

They both thought long and hard, and decided that pen and paper was the best way to reach all those they wanted to touch in love.

What became of Tabitha's attempt might never be known. She was praying and hoping otherwise.

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The music reflects the spirit and resourcefulness of this man. 'Requiem for a Mountain Climber' sums up both the tenacity of Uemura and the dedication of the artists to this work. Each of the artists who contributed to the album perform on this piece as an encore of their esteem of human courage.

TABLE TALK is published monthly by students at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg.

Opinions reflected are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor or editorial board, the Student Association, or seminary.

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Report --

of the Student Association President '86-'87

Because of publishing difficulties this has turned into a yearly instead of semesterly report. By way of a few general opening remarks, I have not been the only one to observe a decline in student activities this year as opposed to previous years. This may be due, in part, to the shift in demographics of the student body to fewer young, single students and more married or second career students, and a concurrent "privatization" of leisure and voluntary activities.

This is a very general and highly speculative observation. It must also be noted that this is not necessarily a bad trend -- maybe students are so enthused by academics that they have less time for communal leisure. Unfortunately, pathetic attendance at lectures, convocations, and discussions and other activities in any way related to theology would point to other reasons for the drop in student activism. Since the student body changes drastically every year, it must be left to succeeding administrations to judge if this is indeed a trend!

To report the business we did carry out, it is easiest to review the work of the standing committees:

The Athletic committee organized the traditional intramural sports, including flag football and volleyball, as well as sponsoring tourneys in ping-pong and racquetball. The all-star football team did go one to hand decisive defeats to Mt. Airy (33-8) and VTS (31-20), and many pickup basketball games were enjoyed at the YWCA.

The Family Life committee did a fine job of accomplishing their goal of extending community events to single and married students. They sponsored several community meals in cooperation with the Refectory and succeeded in providing child care for many events. They also worked in conjunction with the Social committee, which effectively executed parties and other social events to relieve the tensions of academic life.

Our Lecture committee was especially active this spring, sponsoring sherry hours with faculty and bringing Paul Hinlicky, a noted Lutheran pastor and theologian, to campus. It also will be sponsoring a sample Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogue by Prof. Gritsch and Prof. Carl Peter from the Catholic University of America.

TABLE TALK was published twice in the fall, but was delayed for various reasons until the whopping good year-end issue. The biggest problem was a dearth of articles.

Social Action was by far the most active of our standing committees this year, supporting monthly themes and events on campus and in the local community. These folks deserve our thanks for acting as community conscience this year.

In addition to the six standing committees, the Student Association supported two other organizations this year. Partners, a spouses group, sponsored regular meetings and programs focusing on areas of concern and interest to spouses of those preparing for work within the church. They also provided several study breaks with lots of home-baked goodies, which turned into great social events. Partners has made an enthusiastic and valuable contribution to the life of the seminary.

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OPINION & REFLECTION

A FINAL WORD ON INCLUSIVITY

by Jan Davis

In the previous issues of TABLE TALK, there have been several articles on the issue of inclusive language centered on the aspects of masculine and feminine usage. There is another issue in regards to the use of inclusive language on this campus. It is the exclusiveness of language and attitudes concerning the Master of Arts in Religion students and it occurs in classes, in chapel, and in TABLE TALK.

In classes, most teachers assume all students are in the Master of Divinity program when, in fact, there are those of us in the M.A.R. program. We are constantly being told that we have four years to find our own answers to particularly difficult theological questions we face as Juniors. However, some of us have only two years to struggle with those same questions and to come to terms with them.

A questionnaire in the last issue of TABLE TALK stated that "every one of us" will complete internship before graduation. Teachers tell us that we will have the chance to work out answers to theological questions during our internships. On the contrary, not every one of us will have the experience of internship. M.A.R. students must form those answers right here.

Teachers, chapel leaders, and preachers make constant reference to the "fact" that one day all of us here will be pastors. We may all be ministers in our own ways, but we will not all be pastors.

The admissions handbook states, "The level of achievement expected by students in the Master of Arts in Religion program is the same as the Master of Divinity program." M.A.R. students are studying for ministry, whether it is for professional service in the church or for theological disciplines in other fields. Even though we are a small percentage among the seminary community, we are here to become professionals in a theological area of study and deserved to be recognized with inclusiveness.

(NOTE -- the quotation above was taken out of context of its sentence and should have been quoted as, "Every one of us will complete some form of internship before we graduate and pursue calls in the ministry." This questionnaire was addressed to M. Div. students only who, as part of their established curriculum, are required to complete an internship. The Student Association who put the questionnaire together did not mean offense to any member of the community in citing a simple fact that referred to M.Div. requirements.)

INTERNSHIPS FOR M.A.R. STUDENTS

by Katherine Cartwright

In reading Jan Davis's editorial regarding treatment of M.A.R. students, it struck me that the seminary may be doing much less than it could be to prepare its Track A M.A.R. students for professional service in the church. During my teaching parish experience, especially, I have noticed the less than favorable state of Christian Education in the church. Some, even many congregation may have excellent Christian Education programs. Probably, though, a high percentage do not. With all the responsibilities of pastors, many may not have the time or resources to create such excellent programs. It is the responsibility of seminaries to train professional leaders in the church. These professionals have an equal responsibility (as pastors) to the congregations they serve.

The educational philosophy which governs the preparation of pastoral candidates should also govern other professional leaders of the church, especially Directors of Christian Education who have as important a role in the congregation as pastors do. Better education of congregations would lead to more active and committed congregations.

I wonder why it is that Track A M.A.R. students do not have the benefit of the internship experience and the benefit of another year of study after an internship to integrate education and internship? Track A students must serve in a teaching parish for the same reasons M.Div. students must. I think most would agree this was as valuable to their education as it is to M.Div. candidates' education. An internship for Track A M.A.R. students would be a valuable addition to their preparation for professional leadership in the church.

It is advisable that the administration of this seminary look into the matter of upgrading the education for M.A.R. Track A students to include some sort of internship and succeeding semester of coursework for integration purposes. Better preparation of candidates would make for better leaders; better leadership makes for better congregational life.

The symptoms Davis described in her editorial just begin to scratch the surface of the favoritism shown to M.Div. students on campus. I would rather say that some teachers, chapel leaders, and preachers are insensitive to M.A.R. students, rather than making it a sweeping generalization. In any case, this is noticeable to students.

Offering a Gospels course directed to M.A.R. students is also advisable as the class Juniors took this semester was obviously geared toward the preacher and not toward the religious educator. Other required classes may also lay claim to the same problem.

The faculty and administration may not be aware of the dissatisfaction M.A.R. students have expressed, but now that this issue has been brought to light, an administrative review of the situation is recommended.

off the air

by David S. Knodel

Inflation, a public nemesis which has infiltrated every area of the economy, has not been escaped by the record industry. With prices as high as they are, one must be increasingly choosy about which recordings to buy. For someone who is not well-versed in New Age music, what to buy can be a real problem. Traditionally, the industry has solved this problem and extended its market by offering 'best of' and 'greatest hits' albums. Many New Age companies have followed suit to develop interest in their artists. These "samples" can be found in the New Age section of almost any record store.

Windham Hill REcords offers a var-

iety of samplers, yet two releases deserve special mention. "A Winter's Solstice" is a compilation of several artists. Each piece reflects the central theme of the winter season.

Christmas is present through 'Green-sleeves' by Liz Story, but it does not dominate the entire album. Other pieces, such as 'Engravings II' by Ira Stein, and Russel Walder and Mark Isham's 'A Tale of Two Cities' reflect the moods winter can evoke, from the barrenness of the landscape to the warmth of the homestead hearth.

"The Shape of the Land" is a soundtrack of the film "The Story of Naomi Uemura". Uemura, a Japanese explorer whose daring feats have remained unmatched, climbed Mt. Everest, rafted the length of the Amazon River, and alone reached the North Pole. During a solitary climb of Mt. McKinley in 1984, he disappeared.

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S.A. President Report, continued from p. 3

Quest, another enthusiastic group this year, broadened its focus to concern inclusivity in all facets of church life. The half-hour format was changed to longer evening programs, and they sponsored several lectures and discussions as well as a trip to Princeton for the Women's Interseminary Conference.

Other issues discussed at our business did not blossom into major controversies. The Heath Fund was reorganized to provide smoother year to year transitions. The placement of internships in the third year was a hot topic for a while, and we concluded that the seminary needs to develop more sites near Gettysburg to cope with the needs of students with families.

A brief furor arose over smoking during coffee hour when smoke levels sometimes gets high enough to drive people away. The senior class made a good-hearted proposal to donate an exhaust fan as the class gift, but it was obvious to some that this would not solve the problem. After finding air cleaning options to be neither efferctive or available, the students decided not to ban smoking but to call for consideration on the part of smokers and non-smokers alike. In my personal opinion, this is a classical wimp-out, but next year's SA needs something to dispute too.

A student search committee was formed to take part in the faculty searches held this spring, which provoked surprisingly little public debate. It must be said that while some students will continue to see the seminary's experiments in token representation of minorities a travesty in the church, others view these steps as positive ones. It is my hope that students continue to insist that we learn from these attempts and remain challenged by them to resist falling into complacency before sexism and racism.

All in all a quiet year...Many thanks to those who worked on behalf of the Student Association as we struggle to interpret our lives as servants of Christ's Gospel. His Peace to all --

-- Steve Verkouw, president

Poetry

The Wind Alarms Our Little Son

The wind alarms our little son at midnight in his bed
 His feet kick twice; his little voice, it hollers from his head
 And I, in my adult-like skin, roll over in my bed
 And in the dark into his room my feet are softly led

I hear his little squeaky voice say something in the dark
 I see his little crumpled form, a car that's wrecked in "Park"
 A twisted heap of sleeping breath, a question that is dark
 I stoke his head and sing a song like Noah on the Ark

"Oh can it rain forever?" he asks me with his eyes
 "And what, Daddy, is thunder that I am so surprised?"
 I wonder what he sees then as he looks me in the eyes
 It's not the answer but the look which makes a parent wise

And so the world it rattles and the trains ignore the towns
 The rain is like a boring guest who beats the flowers down
 And I'll be old when our small son will be out in the towns
 At 3 AM he'll run and laugh the lightning underground!

With my old man's empty pillow, I'll kick twice in my bed
 The yellow glow of windows long ago turned cold and red
 The wind will crack the window with the words my Mother said,
 "The wind alarms our little son at midnight in his bed."

-- Tim Craven
 November 19, 1986

FIRSTand last.

THAT POISONOUS SNAKE

It topples governments,
 wrecks marriages,
 ruins careers,
 busts reputations,
 causes heartaches,
 nightmares,
 indigestion,
 spawns suspicion,
 generates grief,
 dispatches innocent people
 to cry in their pillows.

Even its name hisses.
 It's called gossip.
 Office gossip,
 shop gossip,
 party gossip.
 It makes headlines
 and headaches.
 Before you repeat the story,
 ask yourself:
 Is it true? Is it fair?
 Is it necessary? If not, shut up!

(Submitted by Darcie Rodman and reprinted from the Christ
 Lutheran Newsletter, Preston, Minnesota.)

just one more

To Reach Out and Touch

The receiver sits in its cradle
as I longingly wait for your call.
To hear your voice means much to me,
though, I know what you'll say before you dial.
You'll say you're fine and all is well.
The weather is nice
and work is a drag.
But there'll be more which won't get said,
and the words "I'm fine" will lose their stress.
My gut and my mind won't be sure what's really true,
for it's easy to tell half-truths through telephone lines.
There, our eyes can't meet in tenderness
and our hands can't grasp from loneliness.

I've read your letters and held your pictures
as many as three times each night.
And the memories of the few times together
remind me our love is more than just our words.
It's not the same through a lifeless cord
when you're so far away.
Our love is bound in circuitry and really, it isn't fair.
I hate this feeling and pray it isn't long
for I can no longer say I'm fine.
Do you truly feel our love affair will endure these distant miles?

Oh, honey, I wish you were here
to know you're really fine.
I miss your loving hugs and your peaceful kiss,
and the words with searching eyes.
I love you more than words on the phone can say,
and to reach out and touch is merely a dream.
But now, I guess I have to wait.
Oh, honey, I wish you were here.

-- Roger L. Steiner
March 2, 1987

THE PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE WISHES EVERYONE A SAFE AND HAPPY SUMMER.