

Table Talk

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



VOL. XXIII

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January 1988

Community Argues Language

God-talk: Another Opinion
by Mary Hellwig

As a member of the worshipping community at the seminary I would like to thank the worship committee for continuing to struggle with the difficult issue of an inclusive language translation of our Morning Prayer service. There is no all-satisfying answer to the question of which kind of language should be used in our liturgy, and I am pleased that this has not stopped the committee from wrestling with the topic.

On this same topic I would disagree with opinions voiced in the last issue of Table Talk which see the struggle with inclusive language as being disruptive to our "common liturgy." We will have no truly common liturgy until we all sit together at that one banquet feast. As long as the experiences of the people who gather to worship differ, so will liturgies differ. With this in mind I would hold that our worship together is enhanced and not disrupted by the varied experiences of the faith that members of the community bring with them into worship.

(continued on page 2)

For a Traditional View
by Alex Crouch

It is very tempting to let the latest eruption into print of the emasculated language issue subside without contributing further to it. On one hand I have recognized the obtuseness of this attempt to lobotomize the English language (on whose account, unlike Ians Alexis, I am not inclined to be apologetic) from the day when the seminary shoved its brochure in my face; a second, and thankfully final, year has only proven the absurdity to which it is destined to be reduced. On the other, the articles by Messrs. Jenson and Biles need little reinforcement: the former in his inimitable way demolishes this jargon's theological pretensions, while the latter catches out its proponents' arrogance.

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For some members of our community, "God" is a more faithful way of addressing the One who raised Jesus from the dead than is "he." The fear that by avoiding the use of pronouns we will lose touch with the Christian God seems to me to be unfounded. I would hold that Christians must always question whether they are truly worshipping God or gods created from their own projections. But using "he" to refer to God has never in itself prevented idolatry from occurring. An even cursory glance at the history of the Church suggests that nothing can prevent the human being's innate tendency toward idolatry. Indeed, refusing to use anything but "he," "him," "his," to refer to the Triune God projects maleness so consistently onto God that the human speaker effectively creates a god in the image of human maleness. Yes, we do worship God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" does not mean -- and has never meant -- that God is male, and "maleness" simply cannot be excised from the English pronoun "he." I believe that a more faithful way of worshipping would be to limit our use of male pronouns to refer to God, to begin to draw on female imagery of God found within Scripture itself, to use "God" as the Spirit so moves, and to tolerate the awkwardness of having our notions of God challenged; such awkwardness seems to me to be a step toward guarding ourselves against the sin of idolatry.

I must also comment on an opinion voiced quite often in the community that the issue of inclusive language is not of interest in the parish and thus the introduction of the issue is a projection of the pastor's needs onto his or her congregation. I would completely agree that it is the pastor's responsibility to deal with the needs of the congregation. But only a shallow reading of "needs" within a congregation could overlook the destructive effect of sexism on the life of the community. Sexism, like racism, invades every aspect of our life and language, so much so that we often take its presence as simply "the way things are" and deny its very existence among us. A look at language can be a way for people to begin to reflect on their own experiences of sexism. True, the pastor can choose not to deal with this need, but it would not be because the need did not exist. There is no congregation that knows no sexism nor racism, except that place to which we are all heading -- where all our relationships will be made whole in Christ Jesus.

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Opinions reflected are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editors, the Student Association, or the Seminary.

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So it was tempting, as I said. But there remains a few points worth making. I probably should be reluctant even still, since I likely form a minority so small as to be effectively silenced. The broad consensus on this campus seems to be that "God-talk" should largely retain its traditional expressions, and only "man-talk" be sanitized. This is a queer kind of dualism, and I'm not sure whether God should be pleased at the condescension or angered at being put away in a kind of verbal retirement home. Any curb on this linguicidal mania should be welcome, I suppose, but this compromise is unsatisfying. God and man- his image, should not be so divorced, the one retaining his integrity, the other dissipated into various prim circumlocutions.

On this point, our concern, unabashedly, is speech and particularly meaning. I will take my stand on one example, but it suffices, for it is the great scandal -- a word potent to send proper young ladies from the room. Calvin said even a child knew the word "man" was inclusive of both men and women. I don't really suppose this will convince anyone not already so minded. So I would turn to the Oxford English Dictionary, which supports its descriptive definitions with citations from every age of the language; there is a certain aptness to one of the earliest examples (A.D. 825): "hwet is mon thaet gemyndig thu sie his," Ps. 8:4. The etymology of "woman" is equally instructive. Or one could turn to a concordance of the RSV and see how the heirs of 1611 use the word. Knowledge of ancient Hebrew has burgeoned in 350 years, but I will go sooner to Lancelot Andrewes to study English than to professors of Hebrew.

"Man" means "humanity" -- just as "brotherhood," "fellowship," and the like (even the suffix "-man") mean what they mean. Against them comes only the arbitrariness of Humpty Dumpty: "when I use a word, it means just what I choose it mean." The enthusiasts of this issue should submit to the education they are always ready to submit others to.

Another reason to refrain from the emasculated language debate is the perilous confusion of agenda indicated by the more common phrase "inclusive language." Seemingly one can never stick to questions of verbal meaning or usage without drifting into the real issue, the inclusivity gospel; to defend a conservative use such as the above is to become, transubstantially, a male chauvinist bigot and scapegoat; a supporter of Reagan, apartheid, nuclear power, and probably the liberal use of salt. Linguistic good sense does not preclude an implicit and living inclusivity, which I take to mean the affirmation and encouragement of diversity. In fact, doesn't a totalitarian attitude to language stifle the very diversity the inclusivists talk of? Their "preemptoriness" also makes arguing with them misery, for one seems to prescribe as absolutely as they, with flexibility (diversity's cognate) the inevitable sufferer. For example: I defend the use of "man" heartily, but not to demand its use for all references to mankind, only its acceptance when used. Let an informed sense, not ideology, arbitrate, which is only the sane rule of all good writing. Rend your hearts and not your garments. The mind colors speech; if it is tarnished, polish it and its words will likewise shine.

So much matter comes merely to this: be tolerant, prove that so much talk of inclusivity is not cant and self-interest. Be tolerant, not only of people but of words, the congealed breath of many people hanging in the air. Nor be so willing to be offended, in the absence of offense. Use all gently. Remember also that when things indifferent, like the surplice -- which to some bruised consciences once seemed the very rags of the popish mass shop, just as these words may seem the bruises of patriarchal terror -- are made gospel issues, it is just the beginning of sorrows.

King's Day

by Kerry L. Riley

It was with great pain that I read last month of the Student Association's decision not to honor the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. by calling for an academic holiday. Since that time, I have spoken with several people and reflected on what has happened, as well as what needs to happen. In this column, I hope to communicate several items of information, and I hope to raise provocative questions that will stimulate discussion on the matter for years to come.

First of all, I think that there are many people who do would agree that Martin Luther King was a great person who had much influence within American society and the world. Perhaps there is disagreement as to the magnitude of that influence. King stood as a prophetic voice against the sin that Jesus' death and resurrection defeated. Using a Gospel-based strategy of love and non-violence, King began to overturn a system of hatred and oppression. He actively sought a life where peace and justice were the fruits of being in the Kingdom of God. He gave everything to the accomplishment of this dream -- including his life. No other figure in this century has influenced the world as he did.

But what is the proper response to his influence? Is calling for an academic holiday an appropriate response? I believe that the answer to this is yes, and I will explain why by responding to the rationales given for not honoring the holiday. The three most common rationales are 1) "I would just sleep in anyway," 2) "The only reason that we are doing this is because the other schools in the Consortium are off," 3) "We don't get any other national holidays off." Rationale 1 is very interesting because the option to sleep in is open to us every day. But we do not choose it. I too support using part of the holiday for a symposium on King and his ideals. Yet the choice would still exist whether to attend or not. Some would and some would not. Regardless of your choice, your consciousness would have been raised as to why you have the day off; I know that this would cause people to pause and remember the day as well as the man. Setting aside our ritualistic agenda with such a symbolic action is a way of telling ourselves and the world that this is something very important. We must take time to reflect upon its importance in our lives.

This brings me to rationale number 2. Yes, the other schools in the Consortium are off that day but the fact that they are is a strong statement to everyone who reads the Consortium bulletin. Unfortunately, Gettysburg has a very bad reputation for being a racist school. That we are the only school to hold classes on that day easily supports this view. If we are serious about attracting students of color to our seminary, then we should take a careful look at the image we present.

Rationale number 3 is unsupportable. First of all, classes are cancelled on both Convocation and Colloquium Days -- days that are holidays for no one. Secondly, there is no other national holiday that so directly captures the essence of the Gospel message as the one that honors King. This is the reason why a day of remembrance would be appropriate.

Recently, I found that last year the faculty and administration were willing to cancel classes if the students would plan an event marking the day. Unfortunately nothing happened last year and no one is quite sure where the blame lies. Did the faculty not communicate its intention to the students? If they did, why didn't the Student Association follow up on it? The only thing that occurred last year was a petition calling for an observance of the

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Upon Further Reflection....
by Lans E. Alexis

Since receiving several readers' verbal pros and cons on my editorial opinion of last issue, I would like to clarify two points.

One: I see the use of pronouns as a matter of allowing the poetic meter of liturgy to be free of awkwardness. When one is singing or saying the Psalmody, for example, it is difficult to eliminate completely a pronoun and still be poetic. When one is working with Biblical material, this is especially hard given the need to be true to the writer's poetic and theological intent. I personally would be less hesitant to do this with hymn texts, extra-canonical liturgies, and Scriptural passages that are blatantly offensive and unjust.

Two: I was perhaps unclear and misleading when I stated that Jesus is the Holy Spirit. Dogmatically, it is better to say the Spirit is Jesus or of Jesus, as we confess in the Nicene Creed, "who proceeds from the Father and the Son." I was informed that the first statement could lead to some form of heresy that I'd never heard of before, but God knows my examining committee probably would know, so I want to retract that statement. (Sorry, had to slip a joke in.) My contention still stands that the human -- not just male, but human -- Jesus is the most knowable reference to the Triune God. Thus we are left with a peg on which we must of certain necessities hang a pronoun.

A question still lingers for me and I ask members of QUEST to help me, and others, find some answers for it. If, of necessity Jesus became human, what are the implications of Jesus being male for men and women? The answers may help one discover why we should or should not use pronouns to refer to God, the Father and the Spirit.

I thought I saw
-Anonymous

somebody's space-shuttle aero-van vandalized. The
vista-view window/hold tightly taped, tight, clear plastic
to keep the inclement in place -at bay-
somebody's quick, neat, temporary fix
as I steered around the left-glass, of its eye
in the street. . .

My earliest memories are dipped in egg,
as I was once the toast of France.

Let us hawk our poems then, you and I, among the poor
to salve the sacerdotal taste for more
than bread in the street. . .

The cake-words we brought from Acapulco,
as we leapt from the most high places
to descend like swans -free-

To plunge in fear or fall with grace,
the revealing art of faith to face

A moment of choice and a science of water,
the waves and the bay

The moment for nothing more than expressing
a graceful arc, Desein, determined
to be borne again by the seaward waves
in the street.

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Grief
by David Eck

Grief is a lonely process
for no one understands
exactly how you feel.

People try their best
They say they know
what you're going through.
But they don't.
It's just not possible.

They never knew
the person you lost
in quite the same way
as you did.

They never shared
the same special moments
or have
the same precious memories.

They never experienced
the same feelings
that bonded the two of you
together in the first place.

But now that bond is broken.
And you are cut off
not only from the one you love
but from the rest of the world
as well.

It is a scary
and lonely thing indeed.

When Death Comes
by David Eck

Death comes
so quickly
so suddenly
Like a thief in the night
It steals away
those whom we love
And leaves us feeling
so violated
so insecure
so defenseless
so alone

Even Jesus
when dying on the cross
cried out in anguish
"My God, My God,
why have you forsaken me?"
His cry resounds
in the depths of my heart
For I, too, feel forsaken of God

My prayers
seem to go unanswered
My questions
seem to fall on deaf ears

Who will still this violent rage
that thrashes about within me?
Who will heal this festering wound
that has pierced my heart?

Perhaps time
will be the ultimate bearer of truth
But then again, time
is so fragile
especially when death comes

Pop Culture

C. Clinical
P. Pastors
E. Elsewhere

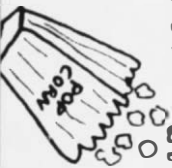
by Lans E. Alexis

If you have never watched an episode of St. Elsewhere in your entire life, you owe it to yourself as a pop theologian to check it out. Because they have introduced a new character to the corridors of St. E's: a chaplain. But not just any chaplain -- no, no, no, friends of feel-good-theology; the woman is an Episcopalian divinity student, and get this, she is doing Clinical Pastoral Education. Hey, if I'd have known I could pray with Dr. Craig over his blessed sheep, I'd have signed up years ago!

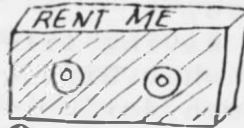
What are the implications for this first ever inside look at a CPE group on national television? Can you imagine the good it will do this nation's psyche when Chaplain McCabe's supervisor turns to the screen and says, "How do you feel about that?" How seminarians and clergy alike will gasp when she sets aside the Book of Common Prayer and really prays from the heart! How it will free the nation's soul to see a woman preaching and administering the Sacraments and laying on hands to the health and wholeness of her patients! How we will agonize with her as she falls for that slimeball, Seth, and is forced to make some hard moral decisions! Won't you just want to put your arms around the TV and say, "I'm here for you."?

But seriously, folks -- isn't it great that TV has finally recognized the dramatic potential of the CPE experience? We all know that what Dr. Craig needs is a little pastoral care. Doesn't Fiscus want to tell someone what it's like to be dead? Will she establish a pastoral relationship with Erlich and Papan-dreous, and be asked to baptize their baby? And when McCabe and her fellow students gather for their interpersonal seminars, won't it be great to get the real scoop on just who everybody really is, stripped to the bare bones of their existence?

But no, really, I want all you pop culturists out there in the viewing audience to watch St. Elsewhere on Wednesdays at 10:00 on channel 8. Relive the agony and the ecstasy of trying to rebuild your life along with Chaplain McCabe after Dr. Craig tears her guts out. Sigh with recognition as she discovers the ministry of presence. Nod approvingly as she says, "I hope I'll be able to take another CPE course before I graduate." And mostly, pray that they never cancel the best show on the air today. Lord, in your mercy....



MOVIE MOGUL
Lindsay Rhodenbaugh

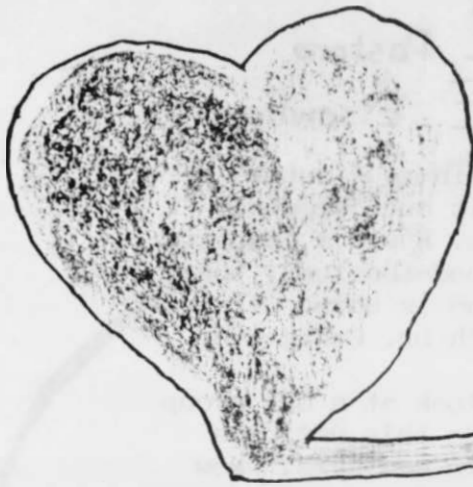


As is my custom, I spent the majority of my Christmas vacation in movie theaters. As a public service, I volunteered to impart to you my reviews of those films that I saw. Surprisingly, Lans took me up on it. Here we go: **** - the best, *** - good, ** - passable, * - don't waste your time.

Broadcast News - The best movie that I've seen since Stand By Me last Christmas. It has everything; love, sex (but not too much, for the seminary crowd), relationships, laughs (many, many laughs), tears, great acting. If you can help it, don't miss this movie. ****+

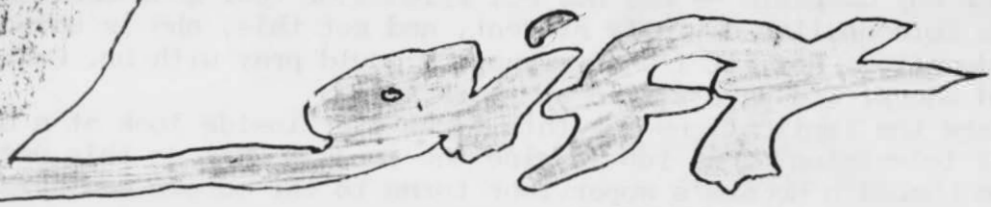
Three Men and a Baby - Not bad. Very cute, especially if you're interested in babies (which I am not). You can't resist the twin girls that play the title role, "baby", and Selleck, Danson, and Guttenberg aren't bad either. There isn't really a plot to speak of, but the movie makes you feel good. ***

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Generic Funeral Sermon
by Tim Craven and Paul Milholland

Dead but(t)



You Are Gifted
by Jon Vogel

My Dearest One,
What have you done with my Gift to you?
When you were with me, I felt my Love for you,
deep, abiding, forever.
I wished to give you a Gift that would bring you happiness,
laughter,
and forever joy.
I wanted you to know the feel of fresh wind in your face,
hear the exaltation of the Ocean in its bed,
sing with the birds of the glory of the day.
The mountains I created for you, forests spread at
their feet.
I made the streams to cool you when you were hot,
and the soft banks for you to rest when you
were tired.
I felt my Love for you, and wanted to bring you joy,
I wished to give you a Gift that would bring you happiness.
I wanted you to know the feel of a child looking at you
in trust and love,
of creating and giving life for yourself.
You who I Love so much, what Gift could I give you
that would bring such joy?

So I gave you Life.

My Dearest One,
What of my Gift to you?
Do not let the darkness of this world cloud your beauty.
Though there be pain and troubles at times
remember I am with you always.
Though clouds do come, I sent my rainbow to remind you that
they cannot win the day.
I gave you this Gift not to show you pain,
but to show you joy.
For I love you, my Dearest Child.

Now the mirror you see is clouded,
all things are not yet clear.
Soon once again you will be with me forever
and all pain and sadness will pass.
But do not now tire of my Gift to you, not yet.
I Love you, and I do not intend to let my Gift
become a burden to you.
So much good is yet to become yours.
All times will not be easy, for you have much to give;
your beauty, your grace,
your love for others,
the mystery and healing power of your voice.
Others have been wounded, too,
and you are sorely needed.
But you cannot fail, for I am with you.

Oh, My Dearest Child,
Do not let the problems of today dim the beauty of tomorrow.
For they are not the least part of my Gift to you.
You are too precious, too special to be harmed by such things.
The Rainbow is here, a brighter day is coming.

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The Running Man - What can I tell you? If you like Arnie Schwarzeneger (or however he spells it), you'll like this flick. The acting is mediocre at best, with the exception of Richard Dawson. There is a great deal of bloodshed and again, not much plot. **

Wall Street - A good serious movie, if you're into that kind of thing. I didn't understand the stock market terminology, but the story was good and the acting excellent. This one was perhaps more realistic than B'cast News, but less enjoyable for my money. If you're into greed, go see it. ***

Since returning to the 'Burg, I have taken what little time senior J-term leaves me to rent a few other movies for VCR viewing. Here is a brief rundown on those;

Roxanne - Probably the best Steve Martin movie to date. He is subdued and relaxed, and very funny in a quiet sort of a way. ***

Mannequin - Not a bad movie, relatively amusing if you've got nothing better to do on a night when St. Elsewhere or LA Law aren't on. **

Pinochio - I rented this one for my daughter, but when she fell asleep in the middle, I didn't turn it off. A classic animation feature. ****

Blind Date - Another mildly amusing tale. If you like Bruce Willis and don't get to see enough of him on Moonlighting, this movie's for you. I enjoy dark humor, which this largely was, so it gets higher marks from me. ***

Tin Men - Not wildly funny as I had hoped from Danny DeVito, but not bad. Richard Dreyfuss is looking good here and playing off DeVito well, but the humor was a little too tame for me. **

Raising Arizona - The best of the rented videos that I viewed. Another "baby" movie, but far superior to 3 Men. A really dark comedy, but very, very funny. You probably need to see this one (as well as B'cast News) more than once to get all of the humor, to really appreciate it. ****

That's all of your valuable time that I'll take for now. If you're interested in more complete reviews of these movies, stop me on the street. If you've seen a good movie not mentioned here, tell me about it. If you disagree with one of these reviews, keep it to yourself.

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holiday. But nothing was done. Somewhere, the system broke down.

However, the dream continues. There was the Gettysburg area service honoring the work of Dr. King, and he was remembered twice in our own seminary worship. Many of us wore armbands on January 18th remembering his vision and pledging ourselves to be in solidarity with his dream. The Student Association has now organized a task force to mark April 4th, the twentieth anniversary of his death. This task force is also charged with looking into possible ways to honor the January Day of Remembrance so that any oversight will not happen again. I pray that things will change. I hope that my pain becomes celebration.

A letter came into the Table Talk mail room that we wanted to share with you graduating seniors out there who harken back to your first days here at LTSG. Do you remember this voice out of the past?

"Some of the Seniors may remember a semester of "Early Church and Creeds" in the fall of 1984 -- long Wednesday afternoons of intense lecture and overhead projections, and a rather frightening and uncommon oral final examination.

I certainly remember it, and particularly remember the fine quality of the people in that class. I've often thought of you during the past academic year when most of you were interning somewhere in parishes or other ministries. Now, as Providence has brought me to western Pennsylvania, I send you Christmas greetings and hope that in the years ahead I shall have the occasional opportunity to see some of you once again.

May God bless you in all your ways!

Sincerely,
Rev. Michael Slusser
Associate professor of theology"
Duquesne University
Pittsburgh, PA 15282

Thanks, Father Slusser. Keep on quoting Dylan, and we'll keep writing weird papers.

CALENDAR

Wed., Jan. 27	Board Committees
Thurs., Jan. 28	Board of Directors
Fri., Jan. 29	Close of Middle Term (Whew!)
Mon., Feb. 1	Spring Term Begins
Wed., Feb. 3 7:30 p.m.	Opening Eucharist
Mon., Feb. 8 3:30 p.m.	Faculty Meeting
Wed., Feb. 10 6:30 p.m.	Quest
Thu/Fri Feb. 11-12	Intern Matching Workshop
Fri., Feb. 12	Table Talk Deadline
Mon., Feb. 15 3:30 p.m.	Student-Faculty Relations
Tues., Feb. 16 6:30 p.m.	Vespers
Wed., Feb. 17 11:30 a.m.	Imposition of Ashes (Ash Wednesday)
Wed., Feb. 17 7:30 p.m.	Eucharist at Christ Chapel, Gettysburg College
Fri/Sat Feb. 19-20	Student Retreat with Dr. Henry Horn: A Christian Style of Life



A JUST-REPLY

