

# Table Talk

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



VOL. XXIII

No. 4

February 1988

## Frances... Just Frances *by Kans E. Alexis*

Table Talk would like to officially welcome soon-to-be Dr. Frances Gench to the campus of Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary. We gave her a year and a half to get used to the place and now she feels able to understand our strange accents. "As someone from south of the Mason-Dixon line, how could I not feel comfortable working on Confederate Avenue?", the latest of our new professors remarked. "I'm proud to say that the middler class will be the first in this institution's history to speak New Testament Greek with a Southern accent."

Frances Gench has been informed recently by Union Seminary of Richmond, Virginia, that her doctoral dissertation has been given the go-ahead, and with some minor revisions in the paper, she will be able to graduate this May. How does it feel to be referred to as Dr. Gench? She still prefers to be known to the students as Frances, and she will allow them to call her Dr. only as long as it takes for her to get used to hearing that term. But "Mrs." Gench is a small faux pas to her ears. "Everytime I hear that I look around to see if my mother-in-law is nearby."

She is currently teaching a course on the Gospel of Matthew, which is the subject of her dissertation. In the paper, she looked especially at the influence of the school of Wisdom on Matthean Christology. In sum, she feels there is a connection between the two that has been a source of controversy in various schools of theology these days. (For details, read it yourself!)

Frances has enjoyed every minute of her time spent with the students and faculty here. Still, it is a change from spending all her time for the last ten years on the fifth floor of the Union Seminary library, doing graduate work. And that is where she met her husband Roger, whom many of us are familiar with from facing him on the football field, and the volleyball and raquetball courts.

Balancing their home and career demands have been "crazy, especially as we try to finish two dissertations with the use of just one home computer. But we are good company to each other in our misery." To relieve the stress of being a clergy/student couple, they like to take their bicycles out on the battlefield and just ride.

But now to the tough questions: what is her favorite controversy these days? She laughs and hedges for the safest one she can think of. "Really," she says, "I feel the ecumenical issue is critical. The Holy Spirit impels us as the Body of Christ to unity. It is important to manifest and witness that unity to the world." That corresponds what she feels her role to be on this campus. Both Roger and she are Presbyterians. The presence of non-Lutherans will help remind the students of the diversity of the wider Church of which they are a part. Frances feels that her primary position here is, of course, teaching. That is what she was ordained to in the Church. She has not as yet served a congregation as a pastor, though she has done extensive supply preaching in the area, and is a member of the local presbytery.

(continued on page 4)

Nicaragua: Myths and Realities  
by Harry Laubach

The following are some reflections that grew out of my trip to Nicaragua with Project Gettysburg-Leon on December 27, 1987 through January 11, 1988.

When I told friends that I was going to Nicaragua, the concern most often expressed was that of my safety. Through reports from our government and the news media, we often get an image of a country deeply divided. We imagine a repressive government squelching the freedom of its people, tension and riots in the streets, and guerilla action permeating the country. However, the facts are much different from these images. The war is conducted mainly in the sparsely populated mountain regions of northern and eastern Nicaragua. The Contras use Honduras and Costa Rica as bases, penetrate into Nicaragua to attack and then withdraw across the borders as they meet resistance from the Nicaraguan army. The heavily populated western lowlands of the country are not directly engaged in the fighting.

For a country at war, Nicaragua affords its people an amazing amount of freedom. As visitors from the U.S., we were fully free to go anywhere we wished (except military installations) and to talk to anyone we chose. Nicaraguan citizens can criticize the government without fear and can be members of opposition parties. Such opposition does not affect their families jobs, or status in their communities. The main restrictions they face are related to attempts to undermine or overthrow the government. Certain public demonstrations are restricted, and of course they cannot engage in conversation or activities related to a violent toppling of the government.

The Sandinistas can provide such freedoms because they know that a very large majority of the people support them. We are told that the Contras are engaged in a fight to liberate Nicaragua. However, the people feel they already have been liberated when the Sandinistas overthrew the Somoza government in 1979. Since then the poor people who make up a majority of the population have experienced increased schooling, health care, and economic opportunities. There has been a redistribution of land ownership. No longer is 90% of the land owned by 10% of the population. The people know the Contras are composed mainly of former Somoza National Guard members and mercenaries. They do not wish to be "liberated" by them.

Even the majority of opposition party members are opposed to the Contras. They may not like the Sandinistas, but few want a return to power of those who participated in the corruption and brutality of the Somoza regime. Incidentally, as you might expect, support of or opposition to the Sandinistas generally follows economic lines. The vast majority of the poor who benefited from the 1979 revolution support the Sandinistas. Former large land owners and business people who lost economically support opposition parties. (continued on page 3)

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 editors, the Student Association, or the Seminary.

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Although the majority of the people do not experience the war directly, they do suffer indirectly. Inflation is rampant. There are shortages of basic items everywhere. The U.S. blockade has severely affected Nicaragua. Most families have experienced injury or death to loved ones as a result of the war. In a population of 3 million, Nicaragua has experienced over 65,000 deaths resulting from the Somoza overthrow and Contra war (which they consider to be an extension of the same struggle). Nicaragua is indeed a war torn country.

Surprisingly, in spite of U.S. aid to the Contras, most Nicaraguans like the people of the United States. They make a distinction between our people and our government. They do not like the Reagan administration and cannot understand their support of the Contras. However, they feel a solidarity with our people. They make the distinction based on their own political history. They experienced decades under the Somoza regime in which the government did not represent the will of the common people or respond to their needs. On the other hand, they love the North American music, clothes, sports, movies, and celebrities. They have been told that the majority of the people of the U.S. do not support Contra aid. Thus, they assume our government does not represent our people, similar to their experience under Somoza.

The religious situation in Nicaragua is interesting. There is a deep split within the Roman Catholic church in Nicaragua. To understand the split one has to look at history. After Vatican II, priests were urged to go into the villages and countryside and become more involved with the people. They became active with educational and medical programs for the people. People were encouraged to read the Bible and form Bible study groups. From these activities and groups, base Christian communities were formed and liberation theology blossomed in Nicaragua. The base Christian communities were a strong supportive influence behind the Sandinista overthrow of Somoza in 1979. Although it regarded the liberation theology movement cautiously, the Roman Catholic hierarchy supported the Sandinistas in 1979. However, because of strained ties with the United States, the new Nicaraguan government looked to Cuba and the Soviet Union for assistance. This brought a negative reaction from the Vatican. The present pope has had a bad experience with communism in Poland. Thus, he put intense pressure upon the Nicaraguan church to distance itself from the Sandinistas. This split the Catholic church in Nicaragua. Some priests chose to obey the Vatican while others openly resisted. Today most of the diocesan priests, who are directly under the cardinal, are outwardly critical of the government. Most of the priests of the various orders still support the government.

The Reagan administration, pointing to the rift with the hierarchical church, states that the Sandinistas are anti-religious. This is not necessarily true. Many Sandinistas are very religious. Also, they were the beneficiaries of the liberation theology movement. They still have that support and do not want to lose it. However, they obviously are not happy with the heads of the Roman Catholic church. Their dispute rests with them, not with Christianity in general.

I hope that this article has sparked an interest in the people of Nicaragua. I will happily answer questions you may have regarding my trip. I invite all to a slide presentation and discussion about the trip that will be held in the Coffee Shop on Wednesday, March 2 at 7:30 pm. There will be opportunities there for comments and questions.

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# Alex Crouch writes an Opinion

A lot of muddy, and possibly dangerous, thinking arises from the confusion of the tool and the machine, and the machine is usually the gainer from the comparison. An argument might go something like this: planting sticks and water wheels, the bow and arrow and stirrup were technological innovations in their day and have become acceptable through many years of use. So why should we be disturbed at the further innovations of the bulldozer and the machine gun?

In general this line of reasoning falls into the fallacy of assuming an endless freeway of progress, in which all boundaries and limits of restraint are erased and in which one stage of advance is viewed as equal in all respects to the other. So the planting stick and the John Deere harvester become equal factors in agriculture.

More particularly that initial argument was flawed from the first by the assumption that tools and machines are indistinguishable, interchangeable words. An examination of the words and their root meanings suggests, however, how dangerous a confusion this is.

Tool comes from the Germanic root which gave the words in those languages meaning to fashion or implement, as well as the noun ("tool" of course). A straightforward, earthy, "thingy" word.

Machine's ancestor, on the other hand, meant to be able, to have power, and produced both the English word might and the Persian magus. So machine became the cousin of magic, the doppelgaenger of science, both being attempts to subjugate the natural world to the human will. The closeness of their affinity becomes apparent in the figure of Paracelsus.

The temptation for me is strong to read much into the etymologies, for there is power attached to words; they have the primal eldest power, since the world came to be at divine dictation. So then, opposed to our native, unambiguous word tool, we have the Latinate, 16th century borrowing, coming loaded down with extra-semantic baggage.

It seems to me the real use of a machine, as opposed to a tool, is not to make but to have power, and thus a machine is held not in the hand like a hammer but in the soul or the mind -- "a mind not to be changed by place or time:/ the mind is its own place, and in itself/can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven./What matter where if I still be the same." -- to use the words put in Satan's mouth by Milton.

I remember reading of a conversation between James Watt, who pioneered the use of steam engines, and James Boswell, in which the former declared he sold what every man desires to have: power. The reason people and their tools have been more and more displaced by machines is not the ethical red herring of improving the world or lightening work, but to increase the power of some over others.

So there is no boundless progress from technology to technology. Tools become machines when they cross a certain line. A tool is a channel of work only, under effective human control; a machine does its own work, and as its power increases it passes more and more beyond the control of its human accessories.

( continued from page 1 )

Frances is concerned as well with inclusivity, and with the upcoming elections -- especially how her party (which she'd prefer remain nameless, but you can take a guess) will do this year. So does she prefer Sam Nunn to Al Gore? "I intend to support whichever candidate wins the nomination." Frances is a very loyal Dem- er, party member (notice how editors avoid controversy).

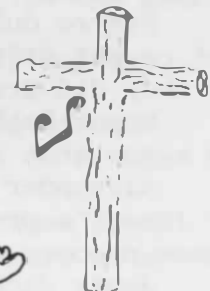
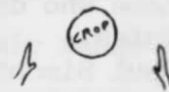
Finally, how does she rate her volleyball team's chances in the tournament this year? "I think we have an excellent chance against Team 2 [currently number One], and we've begun a weight program to get us ready to come from behind to win it all."

Well, y'all heard it here.

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# Calendar

- March 2      7:30 pm    Nicaragua Presentation by Harry Laubach  
in the Coffee Shop
- March 4-6                      Festival Choir Tour
- March 7-12                      Spring Break (Kowabunga!)
- March 14      4:00 pm    Student Association Meeting in the  
Library Lecture Room
- March 19                      Volleyball Marathon to Benefit CROP  
at Gettysburg College
- March 21      2:00 pm    Arthur Piepkorn Lecture and Discussion  
3:30 pm    Student-Faculty Relations Committee  
in the Board Room
- March 23      6:30 pm    Quest in Schmucker Lounge
- March 27      7:30 pm    Passion Sunday Vespers with Schola Cantorum
- March 30      6:30 pm    Quest in Schmucker Lounge
- March 31      11:50 am    Service of Footwashing at College Chapel  
7:30 pm    Maundy Thursday Eucharist



## A Pastor writes us a Letter

I read with interest an article entitled "Divorce and the Clergy" printed in a recent edition of "Table Talk". I sensed in the letter a great deal of anger and hostility, but also, unfortunately, a few gross errors in information. I will address only the errors. I would be most happy to speak with any student or faculty member (including the unsigned one) concerning the policies of the Candidacy Committee of the Church. I was formerly chairperson of the Central Penn Committee on Professional Preparation and am now serving as chair of the Lower Susquehanna Candidacy Committee.

During my time on the committee I have never seen any attempt to discriminate against divorced persons who were preparing for the ministry. In the past four years we have approved for ordination several people who were divorced. It is true that the Church takes a "hard line" against divorce. But I do not know of anyone who has been turned down for ordination or for endorsement for the M. Div. course of study on the basis of divorce. The committee has withdrawn endorsement in a case where marital difficulties had occurred, and it was determined, after much prayerful deliberation, that a candidate had to work out some personal problems before continuing in the pursuit of ordination. This decision is never an arbitrary one but is arrived at through much deliberation and debate among members of the committee.

Yes, the Church is concerned by the high incidence of divorce in our society. This should be a concern of the ordained since our office is such a public one. There is certainly, at this time, no "prohibition" against divorce in the clergy. To imply that there is an attempt to "aim" a prohibition at women is most certainly off the mark. We do need dialogue on this subject, and as suggested, programs and policies to assist married students in coping with the emotional and financial difficulties of seminary.

I will be most happy to engage in dialogue with any students who wish to share their concerns. The Assistant to the Bishop of our synod, Pastor Alan Wenrich, is also most interested in this concern.

In Christ,  
David L. Hunsberger



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# Some Students write Some Lists

Everything You Need to Know to Vote  
by Scott Douglas

With the primary season upon us, it's time to get serious about politics. Not all of us, however, have the time to closely follow the race; for those who don't I provide the following handy guide to presidential candidates.

**Paul Simon:** He tries to get a lot of mileage of the "Harry Truman wasn't afraid to wear a bow tie" thing, but the question needs to be asked: Do we want a president whose hero's wife's name was Bess? The Lutheran connection is supposed to carry some weight around here, but how does a Meese/Rehnquist ticket sound?

**Pierre duPont:** He's drawn attention by proposing that high schoolers who get caught driving drunk have their licenses revoked for two years. He'd rather they die gradually through exposure to his family's chemical wastes.

**Bruce Babbit:** He has some decent ideas, but will the Soviets take seriously a guy that looks like the handyman George on "Newhart?"

**Alexander Haig:** This idea has more merit than it might seem. Should one of Israel's previous prime ministers come back to office, then the Middle East peace process could be headed by Begin and Haig. Tasty prospect, no?

**Jesse Jackson:** He shouldn't be opposed for the usual reasons--supposed lack of experience, Third World leanings, and the like. Rather, do we want a rhyming inaugural address?

**Mike Dukakis:** Maybe he should try again in four years after he's gone through puberty and need no longer literally to look up to Michael J. Fox.

**Pat Robertson:** Don't laugh. If he has the connections to divert a hurricane, who knows what might happen during a shower of Soviet ICBMs?

**Gary Hart:** You've heard all the arguments against him, especially those questioning his judgment. But what kind of judgment would it show for a 50 year-old man to turn down the 29-year-old Donna Rice?

**George Bush:** Maybe the whole experience plea is legitimate. After eight years in the vice presidency of sleeping a lot and not really working, no one is better prepared to fill Reagan's shoes.

**Albert Gore:** He has a shot if he teams up with a certain contemporary author named Vidal. Then, if Gore dies while in office, the Gore/Vidal administration could elevate the hair-care-proprietor-turned-Interior secretary to vice president, thus creating history's first Vidal/Sassoon administration.

**Bob Dole and Jack Kemp:** These two must be considered together. After all, given his professional quarterback experience, Kemp is just the strong right-hand man Dole needs.

Top Ten Ways to Have the Student Conduct Board Look Askance at You  
By Lans "It's just a joke!" Alexis

10. Put whoopee cushions on the organ bench before Chapel.
  9. Use whip cream for anything other than a dessert topping.
  8. Write filler material for Table Talk that is in bad taste, but at least is timely.
  7. Turn in a DPL sermon entitled "Sinners in the Hand of a Miffed God."
  6. Walk into the Pub to the cries of "Norm!"
  5. Claim Bakker and Swaggart as your models for ministry.
  4. Finish an inclusive language service with "...in his peace."
  3. Throw the thurible for a new Olympic record in the hammer throw.
  2. In a counseling practicum, ask "When did you stop beating your spouse?"
- And the Number One Way to Have the Student Conduct Board Look Askance at You  
(drum roll, please)
1. Study Greek intensely.

Reviews of Movies I Never Got Around to Seeing  
by Scott Douglas

Last issue, Lindsay Rhodenbaugh proved his kindness by sitting through many movies and reviewing them for us. I have neither the time nor money to do so, so here are reviews of movies I haven't seen but whose plot I can tell from ads (with apologies to Rodney Anonymous Melloncamp).

"Planes, Trains, and Automobiles"--Steve Martin proves his comic range by getting squashed by fat guy John Candy while travelling.

"Overboard"--Gorgeous and wealthy Goldie Hawn falls for cruddy Kurt Russell after falling off her boat. Insert "lobotomy" in place of "amnesia" to make the premise more believable.

"Leonard Part 6"--The Great Coz does his facial expression schtick and gets us to pay \$5 to watch an extended Coke commercial.

"Moonstruck"--Cher's exploding hairdo latches on to someone half her age. Who says real life doesn't imitate art?

"Running Man"--Arnold Schwarzenegger stars in this tender coming-of-age story set in small-town Iowa sometime in the early '50s. Either that or he has a lot of neat guns and blows the hell out a bunch of bad guys.

"Three Men and a Baby"--Kind of like the "Flintstones" episode when Fred and Barney had to babysit little Egbert, except that Tom Selleck is more of a hunk than Fred.

"Wall Street"--Charlie Sheen gets paid \$8 trillion to star in an anti-greed flick.

"Good Morning Vietnam"--Stay home and watch WKRP reruns. It's cheaper and Howard Hesseman never provided legitimate reasons for legalising quaaludes.

"For Keeps"--I guess it's supposed to caution against premarital sex, but if all I have to do to marry Molly Ringwald is sleep with her I would have long ago.

The ABCs of American Religion  
by Kurt Peterson

I was thoroughly delighted by Scott Douglas' compilation of contemporary phenomena in the last issue of "Table Talk." Naturally, I feel the need to weigh in in this competition (if such it is) with a list specifically dedicated to the fads, fashions, fopperies, hobby horses and assorted trendiness in the American religious scene over the last thirty or so years. Enjoy.

Abortion, "Ad Fontes," albs, Thomas J.J. Altizer, baptism, capitalism, charisma, Christian Broadcasting Network, "Christian Nation," William Sloane Coffin, Harvey Cox, contemporary Christian music, creation science, ecumenism, "family values," Jerry Falwell, glossalalia, God-talk, Amy Grant, guitars, homophobia, L. Ron Hubbard, the human potential movement, inclusivity, inerrancy, Israel, Jesus Freaks, Jews for Jesus, liberation theology, mergers, money, Sunmyung Moon, the Moral Majority Inc., Mormons, Nicaragua, nukes, John O'Connor, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, PII, quotas, radical chic, the rapture, Ronald Reagan, the "two reindeer" rule, Marion (call me "Pat") Robertson, school prayer, Robert Schuller, smells and bells, Stryper, suburbs, T-groups, television, "Up with People," the "Vatican Rag," and white middle class feminism.

REBIRTH

by David Eck  
1/12/88

I. Pushing

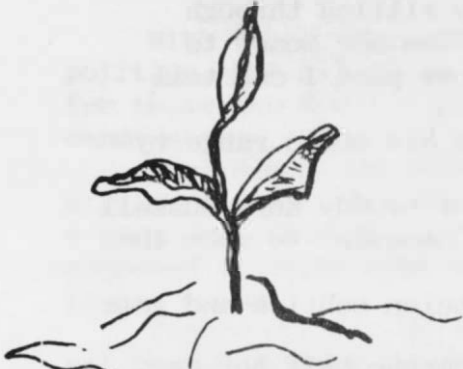
through layers of snow and ice  
the tiny shoot emerges triumphantly  
in the bleakness of winter.

A sign of life in the midst of death.  
A sign that spring has come at last.

II. Struggling

through stages of grief and despair  
the human soul emerges triumphantly  
amidst the crises of life.

A sign of victory in the midst of defeat.  
A sign that new life has come at last.



## Two Musicians write Two Poems

How I Celebrated Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday  
January 18, 1988      Tim Craven

A little Mennonite woman with a net on her head  
in a box Chevy, with two squeaky children  
passed me on the four lane in the foggy Pennsylvania January day.  
I wondered if I was slipping out of touch.

A car from Alabama passed me, bringing Gospel singers  
to the local Church of The Tamborine.  
I thought that maybe things were losing their meaning

I went into a local Christian Bookstore  
and asked for a tape of Gregorian Chants.  
They had never heard of that group.

I began to daydream about the Middle Ages  
I went looking for History in candle light  
and was assaulted by the lights of a 7-11

I tried to notice liturgical significance in the grocery store  
and had my pocket picked in the express line  
I wandered barefoot in the snow in an attempt to achieve anamnesis  
but, as usual, God reminded me that His action, not mine,  
is what will save my blue toes

I went home, totally discouraged  
and thought about Martin Luther King Jr.  
and wondered where I could get my ticket  
to hear him speak again

as if his voice was not alive in every tire  
every moving tire still on the American road  
a corporate conscience droning home

like when the hum of tires hits the windshield in tomorrow's rain

