

Table Talk

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

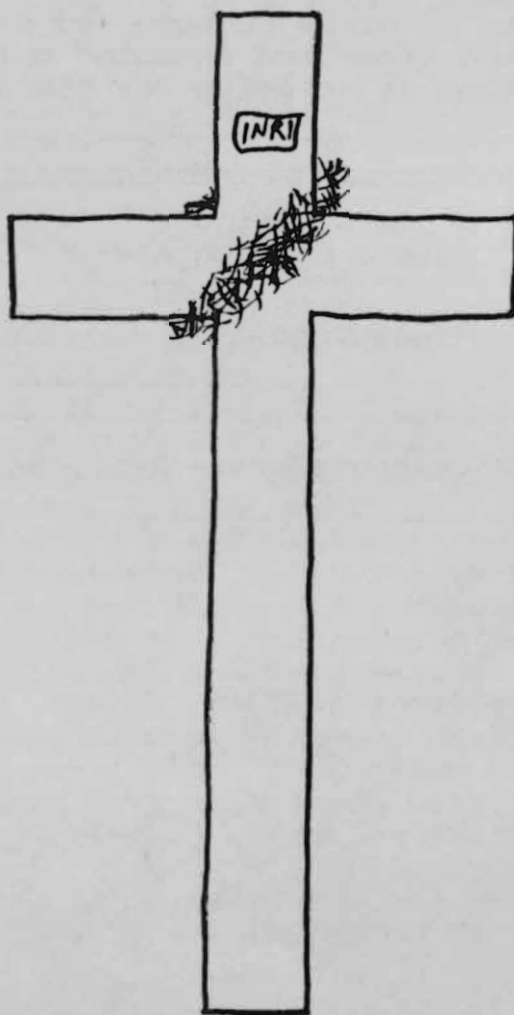


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FROM THE EDITORIAL STAFF:

If you wish to express your views in Table Talk, please do so. We ask that you type and double-space your manuscript so that it will be easier to enter into our computer. Proposals for monthly columns are also welcome. Poetry and art will be considered, but our primary emphasis will be placed on letters, religious epics, UFO reports, and feature articles. Nothing will be published without the author's name. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact one of the staff.

TABLE TALK is published monthly by students at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. The twisted views and demented opinions photocopied on these pages do not reflect the twisted views and demented opinions of the editors, the Student Association, or the Seminary.

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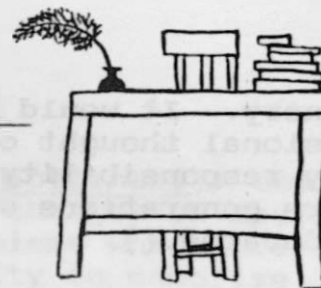
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:

THE FUTURE OF SEMINARIES



By President Herman G. Stuempfle

Most of the time on most days we go about our life on planet earth without thinking about its setting in a vast cosmos. Analogously and on a smaller scale altogether, we don't often consider that our life at this seminary is part of a larger universe of Lutheran theological education.

Fortunately, as students, you can leave worries about such matters to others and focus your energies on preparation for ministry. However, since larger issues in theological education are going to be high on the ELCA agenda during the 1990's (and, therefore, during most of your ministries), I thought I'd use this issue of Table Talk to alert you to what is coming.

Sometime during 1989 the Division for Ministry will launch what is being called "A Comprehensive Study of Theological Education for Ministry." Over the next five years, a task force of ten persons (still to be named) will devote itself to this project. It will unfold in three stages: 1) an evaluation of the present system of pairing, governance, and financial support of seminaries; 2) the development of a vision and a long-range plan for theological education; and, 3) the preparation of recommendations for presentation to the 1995 Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA.

All of this may sound to you as dry as dust and as remote as the stars. Yet, hours of time, quantities of human and natural energy, pints of ink, reams of paper and thousands upon thousands of dollars will be expended as the church struggles to determine how it can provide the best possible education for those who enter its public ministries.

Among the toughest issues to be faced, toward the end of the study, will be the perennial question of the "number and location" of seminaries. The Gettysburg and Philadelphia seminaries have confronted this question, usually framed in terms of "merger" or "unification," twice in the last twenty-five years. Both times the discussions have concluded with an affirmation of the histories and present strengths of both schools and a recognition of the importance of their continuing missions. Though, as that great sage, Yogi Berra, once remarked, "It gets hardest when you predict the future, cause that hasn't happened yet," I'll climb out on a very short limb and forecast that the church will find it difficult to ignore those same realities (and others!) this time around.

So, without worrying overmuch about such matters, get on with the semester's work in the microcosm of one Lutheran

seminary. It would be good, however, if you could spare an occasional thought or prayer for those who will be carrying a heavy responsibility for shaping the macrocosm in which future generations of pastors and associates in ministry will be educated.[]



SOMETHING MORE TO THINK ABOUT:

AUTISM: A REFLECTION OF HUMANITY?

By Roger L. Steiner

I like to watch people. Whenever I enter a restaurant and sit down, I always try to get a seat where I can watch almost everyone there. People are interesting. They are funny, sad, angry, and exhibit combinations of behaviour that are unique to each individual. To watch them is to learn more about humans, and often times, more about myself.

As a person about to become a pastor, I feel it is important that all pastors continually reflect on the human situation, especially that of their parishioners. However, our reflections should not be limited to those of our parishioners lest we lose the global aspect of our ministries. Therefore, any stimuli that comes to us is important.

A recent experience of mine was that of seeing the movie Rain Man, starring Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise. The story is about a man who finds out after their father's death that he has an autistic brother. In his quest to get the enormous estate willed to his autistic brother, this man, played by Tom Cruise, is faced with the reality of autism and also the reality of who he is as a person. If you want to know anything more about the movie, I suggest you go see it yourself. It is excellent.

What I wish to share is the reality of humanity that autism revealed through this movie. Autism is itself a mystery that is only partially understood. DSM-III and other books are able to describe the behaviour of an autistic person, but no one has yet been able to fully understand what causes it. One of the most distinctive characteristics of autism is that of social withdrawal shown in the earliest years of childhood. The autistic person is self-absorbed and does not respond to social contact at all, or in ways we would consider normal.

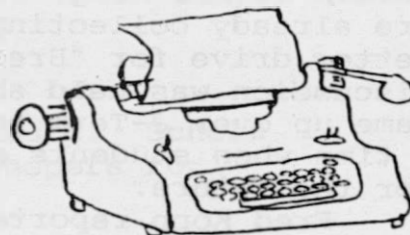
Dustin Hoffman's portrayal of an autistic person is brilliant and beautiful. It combines many characteristics of autism, especially those of immediate or delayed echolalia (the "often pathological repetition of what is said by other

people" Webster's Third New International Dictionary); the setting up of routines and reacting to any changes of routine by screaming or resorting to defense mechanisms which are themselves routines; having an innate ability to memorize trivia or perform complex mathematical computations, but also not being able to know how much change one should receive in a simple business transaction. This does not cover autism of both types as information in the movie revealed. (I was not aware that there were different types of autism until seeing this movie.) However, the inability to relate normally to other human beings is one characteristic which is present in all autism.

What, then, can we learn about ourselves through autism? To me, autism reflects the way in which many people today are becoming socially withdrawn. We all set up our routines and react in uncomfortable or strange ways when they are interrupted. We indulge our intellectual appetites with bits and pieces of information that some people could care less about. People withdraw from society with their books or in front of the television set day after day. We might have the ability to respond to someone who is talking to us, but how much misunderstanding is going on in the world because people hear but do not, or cannot, listen? If we take a look at those around us, we might see a lot of echolalia and blind following of people.

As far as the life of the universe is concerned, the earth is in its earliest stages of childhood, and the early stages of childhood is usually when autism is discovered. Therefore, I put forth the following question for you to ponder: Is the world becoming autistic? Are we becoming withdrawn from others and from God, and how much? If the world is autistic or is becoming autistic on a global level, how does the Gospel speak to us? More importantly, how do we as pastors and lay ministers speak the Gospel to prevent this autism, if preventing autism, e.g. the withdrawing from God, is our calling?

I know these are loaded questions, but they are ones I am wrestling with. I like to watch people because their behaviours speak to me about humanity, God, and myself in relation to both of them. Let us keep asking questions as theological students and teachers, and keep the lines of discussion open on all sides as we continually struggle with our humanity. Perhaps this is the first step in combatting autism as I have attempted to present it here on two levels. What do you think?[]



MORE FASCINATING READING [Part III]:

THE UNOFFICIAL CORE COMMITTEE MINUTES



By Roger L. Steiner

The Core Committee of the Student Association met on Monday, February 6, 1989 at 12:15 PM. There was no meeting in January.

President Joel Benson reported on the progress of the Presidential Search Committee. Everything seems to be moving along at a steady pace. This was followed by the Treasurer's report.

The Family Life Committee, represented by Fred Kopp, presented two issues that need to be discussed. The first is that some students feel there should be lounge(s) available for those who wish to relax and get noisy without bothering those students who are studying. The lounges in East do not seem to be adequate, and the one on the third floor of Baughman could be made more attractive with better furniture and more decor. (These were the specific areas mentioned in the discussion.)

The second item of business was to move that the Student Association start the process to repeal Section D.7 of the Housing Code found in the Student Handbook. If repealed, students will not have to make a formal request to the Housing Committee to live on campus for a fourth year. Currently, all students are limited to three years of living arrangements on campus, with a required written request for the fourth year.

The Junior Class President, Carolann Hopcke, reported that the Junior Class had a meeting which tried to reassess where the class was in its seminary experience, and to try to build some community.

Members of the Middler Class reported that their Intern Matching Workshop was approaching. Nothing else shared.

Lynn Miller Sanner, Executive Officer of the Senior Class, reported that the seniors appreciated J-Term, especially after a hectic fall semester. Regional and synodical assignments are coming up and to prepare for them, the seniors held a "Hello, North Dakota" Party to relax and have some fun. Graduation is slowly coming together. The schedule for May 19th is 3 PM for the community communion service and 7:30 PM for the graduation ceremony.

Speaking for the Social Action Committee, Amy Godshall reported that the movie Cry Freedom! and discussion led by our African friends was well attended and well received. The Martin Luther King, Jr. event in January went well and they are already collecting ideas for next year. There will be a letter drive for "Bread for the World" coming up. Some discussion was held about the timing of recycling pickup. It came up over J-Term break. Would more have been collected at a time when students are on campus? This will be considered for the future.

Fred Kopp reported for Partners. Rev. Stuart Hardy led

a discussion on "Death and Dying", and another discussion was held concerning internships. Chaplain Mark Oldenburg will be leading a couples' night in the not too distant future.

Members of Quest announced its meeting for the next day, February 7th, at 4:15 PM. The film Sarafina was scheduled to be shown and discussion to be led by George DuToit. The film is the story of black students from South Africa who are telling the story of South Africans through a play that they are performing.

Roger Steiner reported that Table Talk was scheduled to be out by the end of February. At the time, there were still no articles submitted. Roger also shared the resignation of Mark Isaacs from the Publications Committee. The Junior Class is urged to find a replacement as soon as possible.

Under "old business", Roger Steiner raised the issue of attendance at Core Committee meetings. Those present agreed that it was important that all elected persons show up to properly represent the students, but were not sure how to impress this upon those who have not been attending meetings. Other old business concerned the supposed meeting of student representatives from the various Lutheran seminaries to discuss the Guidelines for Sexual Conduct. There is a lack of information and President Joel Benson was urged to look into it.

There was only one item under "new business". The Student Association is looking for a person to replace Skip Balko as the Health Fund Coordinator.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:30 PM.[]

Events

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR YOUR ALREADY HECTIC SCHEDULE:

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| February 26 | 8 PM Paul Blanck's Organ Recital in Christ Chapel at the Gettysburg College. |
| March 4 | 7:30 PM Music, Gettysburg! William Whitehead, Organist. |
| March 6-10 | SPRING BREAK!!! |
| March 19 | 7:30 PM Music, Gettysburg! Schola Cantorum Candlelight Vespers for Passiontide. |
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