

# Table Talk

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



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VOL. XXIV

NO. 8

APRIL/MAY 1989

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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.

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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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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT:

A WORD OF THANKS

By President Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr.



Each month the faithful editor of Table Talk reminds me that it's again time to write my monthly column. This month there's no doubt in my mind about what it should be. When the wonderful evening you all planned for Gretchen and me was over, I wondered how I could possibly reach you all with an expression of gratitude. Then I remembered Table Talk.

The community meal and the good time which followed will be glowing memories to carry with us from the Hill. We're grateful to all of you who had any part in its planning and who participated in the program. The lovely floral arrangements have graced our home with the beauty of springtime. The book of letters will brighten days to come with the memory of the bonds which have knit us together in this community of Christ. The elegant torches will stand in the chapel as symbols of the Light of Christ which shines in our darkness and illumines our way. For all these and many other expressions of your love and support, Gretchen and I thank you with all our hearts.

Just this week I've had occasion to check out some facts about the student body during the year in which I became president. It was fascinating to look over the names in that thirteen year old catalog. Most of those persons are now serving the church in some form of ministry. They're scattered from California to Connecticut and from Asia to Africa. How gratifying to know that this seminary and its faculty and staff played a significant role in their formation into servants of Christ and His people!

But I was startled by changes that have occurred in the profile of the student community in little more than a decade. The percentage of women has risen from under 20% to nearly 35%. There are many more "second career" students with a correspondingly richer variety of life experiences in their background. More overseas students have entered our community and opened our eyes to the witness and suffering of brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. What a different place this campus is!

Yet, a reality that does not change is the commitment students bring to their years of preparation for ministry. I could relate many stories of struggle and sacrifice. More memorable, however, is the grace by which successive generations of students transcend obstacles which sometimes seem unsurmountable. In the midst of the most daunting circumstances, there have been hymns of joy. It has been an honor to have been your companion during this part of your journey into ministry.[]

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ECUMENICAL READING RESPONSE #1:



FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE  
By William J. Cork

Hurrah for Jeff Milsten! His point that the ELCA ought to immediately and decisively make a bold stand in favor of the unity of the Church through consistency in the matter of altar/pulpit fellowship is a breath of fresh air. In this response I want not to critique what he said, but to suggest another way of making the same point.

The ELCA (and other denominational bureaucracies) has been treating the matter of fellowship as one item among many aspects of ecumenism. It has phrased the matter thus: how many things must we agree upon before we can recognize one another? This recognition has various levels. Level one: you may commune at my altar, I at yours. Level two: you may preach from my pulpit, I from yours. Level three: you may preside at my altar, I at yours. There are many problems with this approach, not least of which is the predication of denominational ownership of altar and pulpit. There is also the matter of reciprocity, reminiscent of "eye for eye" retribution. There is the utterly unjustifiable separation of Word from Sacrament so obvious at this seminary in its distribution of faculty liturgical roles.

In good Lutheran fashion, I suggest that we look at this matter in light of the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae--justification by faith alone. Simply put, this article states that works have no bearing on our standing before God. We are accepted by Him (justified, reconciled, etc.) solely on the basis of His grace, freely given, accepted through faith in Jesus Christ. We have tended to apply this in two ways. We have used it as the ticket to an individualistic salvation. And we have used it as a "hermeneutical principle" (thus, Gritsch and Jenson) in matters of theology. A number of years ago Krister Stendahl published an insight which is perhaps an application of the Pauline formula most appropriate in today's context. He suggested that the original question to which justification by faith provided the answer was that of table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles. Substituting "Catholic" and "Protestant" (or "Lutheran" and "Reformed," etc.) for Jew and Gentile will bring us to the point I wish to make.

According to Stendahl's argument (reduced here to its necessary absurdity), the issue perplexing the churches in Rome and Galatia amounted to conditions for fellowship. What conditions are necessary for the unity of the church? Is circumcision (or lack thereof) an appropriate condition for admission to fellowship? Paul's answer was a resounding "No." The only condition which may be placed on our fellowship with one another is that which God places on our

fellowship with Him--faith in Jesus Christ. This, I suggest, is the only condition which we may place on the ecumenical fellowship we seek today. This is the sense in which I would interpret the satis est of AC art. 7. It is an ecumenical extension of the principle of justification by faith alone.

Our fundamental confession regarding the Eucharist is that it is the Body and Blood of Jesus. Our central article states that faith in Him is sufficient for communion with Him. By denying full and complete altar fellowship to anyone who has faith in Him, we have denied our central article. The ELCA, and this seminary, have rejected justification by faith alone. We have followed the lead of Rome, Missouri and Wisconsin in a retreat toward sectarianism and legalism. We have set ourselves up as the guardians of the kingdom of heaven, barring those who confess faith in Christ. (Shall we enter ourselves?)

The kingdom and the altar are the Lord's. The Bread and the Wine are His Body and Blood. He invites all to come to Him. Let us not stand in their way.

Turning to this matter of "reciprocity." To the devil with it! The ethic of the Kingdom is not "eye for eye" but "turn the other cheek." We are called not to the bargaining table but to the cross--we are called to follow the footsteps of our Lord, who humbled Himself, emptied Himself, and gave Himself over to death. Let them bar us--we will not bar them. Let them make demands of us--we will proclaim grace to them. Let them deny our standing as catholics--we will deny ourselves.

Yes, Jeff--"the ELCA must lead by example"--the example of Jesus Christ.[]



ECUMENICAL READING REPOSE #2:

A MEASURED CRITIQUE  
By Stephen P. Verkouw

Unfortunately, I need to say at the outset that Jeff's article is a most undisciplined example of the sort of "first-principle theologizing" which serves neither this community nor the further unity of the church. In addition, dialogue with the author's opinions is rendered futile by his imprecise and manifestly erroneous grammar and style. But let me try anyway, in the hope of undoing what are at best some problematic expressions, and at worst, serious misconceptions.

In defining who is or is not Christian, it is indeed best to take the wide view: anyone who is in some way



captured or intrigued or affected by the story of Jesus will suffice to describe a "believer" in our day and age. The nature of the gospel requires that instead of keeping that story to oneself, one is in some way called to repeat it. Believers gathering to do this have been, are, and will be "the church." It seems natural that the church will organize in different ways in different times, places and situations, and it is true that from the beginnings the church's criterion for "recognizing itself" is fellowship at the table of the Lord. I think I can determine that, so far, Jeff would agree.

The problems arise when he tackles the fact of divisions within the church, beginning with his assumption (shown in his interpretation of I Corinthians 10:16-18) that first comes a division of some sort, followed by the act of breaking table fellowship. This simply ignores the facts, available to any student of history, which show that every historic schism in the church resulted from a perceived break in sacramental fellowship or ministerial collegiality. Why were the Arians called heretics? Simply because if they were right, the promises of baptism were not to be trusted. Why did bishops of Rome and Constantinople excommunicate each other? For various political and cultural reasons, no doubt, but also because each party saw and felt in the other forces which pulled them apart at the center of their liturgical lives. Why did Luther stand and face excommunication for his views? Because he could no longer hear the gospel spoken in the structures and institutions of medieval catholicism, indeed in the sacramental heart of those structures! Jeff's confusion on this matter is best expressed when he says, "Altar fellowship...is the first step not the last step to Christian unity." Altar fellowship is the only step; if we must talk about multiple steps, it must surely be the last. There is no Christian unity to be achieved somewhere beyond altar fellowship. Jeff here repeats the same mistake which forced the E.L.C.A. into existence, namely, that our denominational, bureaucratic unity is a valid expression of Christian unity over and above the merging denominations' altar fellowship.

Ecumenical divisions are not in any simple sense Christians withholding table fellowship with one another in order to gain theological or doctrinal concessions. Ecumenical divisions are peculiar, frustrating, often paradoxical; this is true. But it is wrong to infer, as Jeff does in his first paragraph via some mysterious first principle, that those on opposite sides of real ecumenical divides must necessarily call each other un-Christian or declare themselves superior Christians. What divided Christians must do is constantly explore and seek to overcome the divisions that keep them apart at the altar. Jeff's suggestion to simply pretend that such division cannot exist between genuine Christians is really a refusal to recognize that sin permeates the life of the church. Garnering

prooftexts from the Bible to show that we ought to "be one" is just superfluous. Does he really think that the problem is only that everyone has forgotten John 17 and needs to be reminded?

According to Jeff, the major crime of the E.L.C.A. has been its refusal to "put Christian unity first and foremost" by failing to "unilaterally recognize total altar fellowship," the word "total" referring to presiding as well as eating and drinking. In the context of Jeff's article, this seems to refer to a policy of the E.L.C.A. which doesn't allow just anyone to preside at the Eucharist. Perhaps Jeff is unaware that the E.L.C.A. is bound to the Augsburg Confession as a true criterion, created specifically as a means for judging the appropriateness of such table fellowship. Lutherans are bound to ask the hard questions over against other denominations' ministers: Can we recognize the Gospel, consistently spoken, among them? And can we witness the sacraments, administered in accordance with the Gospel? This question, asked of specific ministers, may well receive a positive answer. That pastor is the unequivocally welcome to the Lord's table. But if that pastor continues to represent a ministerium in which the questions consistently receive negative answers, then to allow that pastor to preside would be to say that the hard questions no longer need to be asked. That would be a default from the ecumenical enterprise (which some like to think Lutherans are especially responsible for pursuing) of calling all Christians to a unity based on Jesus Christ's Gospel and His own speaking among us. Even worse, it would be a refusal to take seriously the claims which other traditions make upon us, claims which Jeff dismisses far too easily when he writes: "If other denominations do not respond in kind, that is their decision."

Jeff's obvious heartfelt distress at the ecumenical frustrations of our time is shared by many of us. Hopefully these remarks will serve to show another path than the simple collapse of our ecumenical responsibilities into a rosy world where there are no "conflicting stances" and the collapse of catholic Christian thought into the completely vacuous notion of "faith in God."[]



*Love one another as I have loved you*

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ECUMENICAL READING RESPONSE #3:

TWO CHEERS FOR JEFF MILSTEN  
By Kurt Peterson

As Abraham Lincoln once said, we cannot escape history. Unfortunately utopian dreamers, idealist philosophers, systematic theologians and other dwellers in never-never land have tried since time immemorial to do just that. Jeff's article, "Ecumenism?" in the last Table Talk raises a theological question which must be looked at historically if it is to be considered within the confines of the real world. Alas, while his point is valid and necessary, and gives us an appropriate paradigm for our church's most appropriate ecumenical position, the lack of a historical context, gives the author the appearance of one who hears the alarm clocks in crocodiles. The history of Lutheranism in general and American Lutheranism in particular is the history of a church that has kept other Christians at arm's length and which has made doctrinal conformity the test of unity. This history is not going to go away because some of us may wish it to. Our church's ecumenical stance necessarily takes place within this history and it is futile to wish that it might not.

With that warning, let's look at the content of the proposal as given, viz., that the ELCA unilaterally declare pulpit and altar fellowship with any group that identifies itself as Christian (i.e. with any group that "agrees with the creeds", by which I presume he intends the Apostles', the Nicene, and possibly the Athanasian). Any ecumenical stance short of this position he labels "most un-Christian". Alas, when one now gets down to those historically conditioned cases, the real fun begins. For example, the Southern Baptist Convention looks upon communion, the sacrament of the altar, as an "ordinance", not as "sacrament" at all. Given Lutheran history and the current "liturgical renewal" taking place within the ELCA, is it likely that this church is going to declare altar fellowship with Christians who do not recognize the use of the altar at all? I am not here to rag on the Baptists (Baptist theology has much to recommend it) but merely point out that their understanding of the church is quite different from ours, and raises the question whether some different understandings may in fact prevent the ELCA from declaring fellowship.

The great ecumenical pioneer Count Zinzendorf was willing to overlook almost any theological differences in his search to reunite the churches, but even he drew the line. He did not have any use for separatists, those who became more certain that they held the whole truth the smaller the sect became. Zinzendorf raised the question that we must consider: does an allegedly Christian group cease to be an object for fellowship if its (limiting) understanding of the

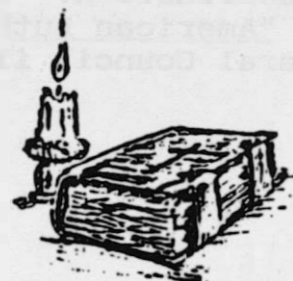


church is too different?

Jeff's article has some great virtues. The first is raising the question about whether communion fellowship is a sign of unity already achieved or a means of achieving unity. Milsten argues for the latter exclusively. On the other hand, if we already have the "unity" in the form of fellowship, what becomes of the theological discussions toward unity that have so enriched the theological understandings of all the churches? Altar fellowship as goal is not to be so lightly dismissed. Declaring altar fellowship, not just for Lutherans, but for all churches means that there are no theological issues between us that are "church divisive". This standard implies unity to be worked toward. It is not a question of being more equal Christians than others, which is the second important issue he raises. As a church we do need to ask ourselves whether the lack of fellowship does indicate that we set ourselves up as "better" than others. Our exclusivist history certainly indicates that we have traditionally thought this way. On the other hand, that all Christians are invited to our altars to commune is a significant ecumenical statement in its own right. No one is refused on a priori considerations from our fellowship. This is a far cry from the days of the Galesburg Rule!

Lastly, why shouldn't communion fellowship, i.e. the exchange of presiders retain its symbolic value, as a statement that there are still theological differences among us? In all other respects the Christian churches of the USA do participate as equals among each other in doing the continuing work of Christ. In fact, the real test of fellowship together is not presiding at the altar, but rather in preaching. Any yahoo can mumble a few words over the elements, but it takes talent, theological understanding, pastoral sensitivity and work to preach. If we concede thusly our pulpits, we've taken the real ecumenical step; let the presider remind us that we do not have full unity.

Anyway, Jeff, I praise you for raising the point. It is too easy to take refuge in Pecksniffian doctrinal distinctions and consequently miss the point of living out a Christian life in the church. And a word of practical advice to ecumenists everywhere: full unity is not going to come from the theologians and bureaucrats in the church, they have their own ideological and political turf to maintain, but from the laity. When the laity have achieved unity by worship together, and by their lives together as co-workers, neighbors, friends, etc., they'll let us know.[]



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MORE FASCINATING READING (V):

THE UNOFFICIAL MINUTES  
OF THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION CORE COMMITTEE  
By Roger L. Steiner

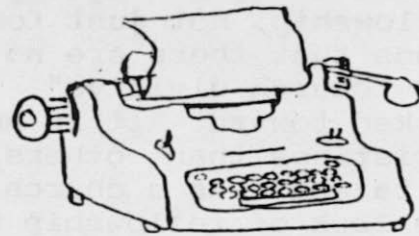
Another easy month for the editor. There was no meeting in April.[]

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SOMETHING NEW FOR TABLE TALK:

A BOOK REVIEW  
By Gil Waldkoenig



The Rise and Fall of American Lutheran Pietism. By Paul Kuenning. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988. 236 pages.

In The Rise and Fall of American Lutheran Pietism, Paul Kuenning adopts a unique approach to the controversies that occupied the Lutherans in America during the nineteenth century. Arguing that Samuel Simon Schmucker's "American Lutheranism" was the true heir of German Lutheran Pietism, and likening the abolitionism of some "American Lutherans" to the "activism" [Kuenning's term] of P.J. Spener and A.H. Francke, Kuenning endeavors to show that the repudiation of Schmucker and New York's Franckean Synod, while being dressed in the gown of confessional controversy, was actually the result of an insipient racism on the part of confessional and quietist Lutherans who feared abolitionism.

The controversies among Lutherans in nineteenth century America are complex and in many ways enigmatic for church historians. Although his book is manageable in size, Kuenning's study is mammoth in scope and consequently sweeping in its conclusions. Since there is currently no abundance of scholarly work on this topic, Kuenning's book suffers from the necessities of venturing alone in a jungle of evidence and continually having to condense huge amounts of background material into usable form. Yet, the broaching of the subject from Kuenning's peculiar angle is a valuable step toward a reappraisal of the role of both Pietism and activism in American Lutheran history.

A serious weakness in Kuenning's argument is his rigid classification: for him, Schmucker's "American Lutheranism" was "American Lutheran Pietism" and the confessional party of General Council ilk was "Orthodoxy." Kuenning's hope of

recovering an appreciation of Pietism would be better served by recognizing that the General Council was also an heir of German Pietism. Kuenning dismisses W.A. Passavant, an arch confessionalist and an activist in the Franckean vein, as an "exception to the rule [of Orthodoxy]." Furthermore, Kuenning downplays the official position against slavery that was taken by the Pittsburgh Synod, a large and influential participant in the General Council, and prefers to highlight the more controversial Franckean Synod of Schmucker's party. But in fact, at times the General Council Lutherans displayed more affinity with the German Pietists than did the Puritan-influenced "American Lutherans," for the German Pietists maintained the doctrinal conservatism of Lutheran Orthodoxy while moving to apply the orthodox doctrine through moral action.

Apart from Kuenning's rigid categories, the rejection of abolitionism among nineteenth century Lutherans appears as a problem of the whole Lutheran community and not only of the orthodox or confessional party. Kuenning suggests that Schmucker served as a "whipping boy" not for his anti-confessionalism alone, but especially for his abolitionism. In many respects, Kuenning's book represents an effort to save Schmucker from pejorative assessment. But rather than reversing the whipping by judging Lutheran silence about slavery to be the result of a hidden agenda of racism on the part of confessionalists, we might more clearly understand the nineteenth century controversies by avoiding a conflation of the issues of confessionalism and abolitionism.[]

*Kuenning*

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UPCOMING EVENTS FOR YOUR ALREADY HECTIC SCHEDULE:

- |           |                                                                                                     |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| May 3     | Spring Convocation.                                                                                 |
| May 7     | Crop Walk.                                                                                          |
| May 11    | Program on Child Abuse. Sponsored by<br>Social Action Committee.<br>7:30 - 9 PM in the Coffee Shop. |
| May 14    | Pfeifly/Pierson wedding. 3 PM.                                                                      |
| May 19    | Graduation Day and Close of Spring<br>Semester. 3 PM Eucharist, 7:30 PM<br>Graduation.              |
| May 22-23 | Intern Teambuilding Workshop.                                                                       |
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THE EFFECT OF OUR VISITING WOMEN PASTORS:  
THE CREATION OF ROLE MODELS

by Sandra Carlson Alexis

Trying to be a woman in the ministry -- not exactly uncharted ground but a struggle nonetheless. Though I'm no history buff, I enjoy the opportunity to talk with other women ministers about their experiences to see how they have managed to overcome some gender-based stereotypes.

On May 18th, the Rev. Carol Hendrix was on campus to talk with students about her experiences as a woman in the ordained ministry. Last semester our Pastor-in-Residence, the Rev. Janet Peterman, was on campus to talk with students about her experiences. Anyone who heard both speakers, may be confused by their diverse examples about how a woman balances her call with her gender.

More important than what they said is who they are. We have lots to learn from Norma Wood, Mary-Paula Walsh and Frances Taylor Gench examples but we women need to see Lutheran women pastors on our campus. (Of course, I hear next year we will have one on our faculty.) As far as I am concerned, I'm glad both Pastor Hendrix and Pastor Peterman came despite their sometimes contradictory ideas about women. Both spurred on discussions and confronted students with issues they may not otherwise have dealt with.

It is clear that Pastor Peterman and Pastor Hendrix come from very different schools of thought. Janet Peterman believes she can be a woman and a pastor at the same time. She prefers to make the lectionary readings inclusive and she would rather not limit God talk to maleness since that very maleness can become idolatrous. Pastor Peterman recognizes that "language is not pure and clean." She said that the language in worship should not bring with it the pain of exclusion. Pastor Peterman says she has experienced several instances of sexism in her parish and she warns seminarians to be aware of it.

Carol Hendrix comes to her ministry as a woman from another angle. She said on Tuesday night that she sees herself as "a pastor first and a woman second" -- a clear distinction from Pastor Peterman who considers her ministry and her sex on an equal basis. She uses male language for God since Jesus called God father and "if it's good enough for Him, it's good enough for me." She prefers inclusive liturgy but would rather not make the lectionary readings inclusive at this time (though she said she could imagine her church doing so some time.) Perhaps most notable is that Pastor Hendrix says she has seen little to no sexism in her parish (although after she made that statement, she gave three or four examples that clearly showed sexism in her parish experience).

In short, I see Pastor Peterman as one who is working to change the church and Pastor Hendrix as one who is going along with where the church is now. Both are valid ways to deal with being a woman in the ministry but neither is the only way. Just as we must look at the historical motivations behind Mark and John, so too we must look at where these two pastors are coming from.

Like any good interpreter, one has to ask what the Sitz im Leben for these two is. Janet Peterman lives in an urban setting (Philadelphia) that is perhaps more likely to accept changes in their worship service. Carol Hendrix, on the other hand, lives in rural Fairfield, which is basically conservative. Pastor Peterman struggled to get a first call while Pastor Hendrix did not experience such a struggle in finding her first position. Pastor Peterman had children while she was working in a church; Pastor Hendrix came to her first church with children. In short, their experiences as women pastors strongly shaped their ideas about their place in the ministry.

When I was young, I was told that I had to get on my knees, close my eyes, and fold my hands to pray to God. Later, I discovered that I could pray while I was swimming, driving, singing, etc. We cannot allow ourselves to be limited by what others do. In this light, I think we all would do well to look critically at examples of women in the ministry. They are after all, examples and one need not limit women in the ministry to the experiences of a few women. We can decide to take parts of Janet Peterman or Carol Hendrix or any other pastor -- male or female -- into our ministries. There are seminarians here who may come up with an entirely new way to balance womanhood and the ordained ministry. I urge all of us to keep striving to create new role models for men and women who will follow us.[]

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#### DO THEY KNOW IT'S MOTHER'S DAY?

On Mother's Day, May 14 at 2:30 p.m. there will be a march in front of the Embassy of South Africa, 3051 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. Come show your concern by joining the march. There will be speakers on solidarity, an update on South Africa by South Africans, and a message on the sanctions issue by Senator Paul Simon. Please make placards that show support of Lutherans for the women and children of South Africa and bring them with you. Contact Khanya at (w) 202-543-8610 or (h) 703-273-2642 for more details.

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The staff of Tabletalk wish everyone a fruitful summer and blessings in what lies ahead. Now, in the immortal words of Tracy Ullman, "GO HOME, GO HOME."