

TABLE TALK

Volume XXV No. 5

March 1990



25 YEARS OF TABLE TALK

News and Viewpoints of the Student Body
of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

FROM THE EDITORIAL STAFF

If you wish to express your views in Table Talk, please do so. We request that you type your articles single-space in columns 3 1/2 inches wide and 8 1/2 inches long with justified margins. Proposals for monthly columns are also welcome. Poetry and art will be considered along with letters, book reviews 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. Opinions reflected are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor or editorial board, the Student Association, or the Seminary.

EDITOR: Viking Dietrich

STAFF: Kris Bell, James Gilmore
Bill Griffith Pat Hendricks
Phyllis Pelletier Brian Rossow
Rebecca Rossow

TABLE TALK, 61 West Confederate Avenue, Gettysburg, Pa. 17325

From The President

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFT

One of the pleasant duties of the presidency is the acknowledgements of gifts to the seminary.

Some contributions come from loyal alumni/ae who presumably are grateful for their preparation for ministry here and their desire to participate in the theological education of others. Many congregations, remembering perhaps their own sons and daughters or pastors who have been students here make annual contributions from special appeals or from a sharing of excess benevolence receipts. There are those too who regularly share endowment earnings for theological education. A few congregations directly subsidize members now enrolled as seminarians.

Memorials in lieu of flowers for loved ones at the time of death are given by individuals, family and groups in large and small amounts, frequently in sufficient cumulative amounts to initiate a scholarship fund or to subsidize a seminary program. This year we shall receive a bequest from one George Huber, deceased, of Buffalo, New York, a scholarship fund of \$590,000, the interest from which will make possible ten or more full tuition scholarships annually.

Sometimes we know the source of monies, sometimes not. Often, the donor requests anonymity, Seldom does s/he want notoriety or publicity, as was the case when our sister seminary at Philadelphia decided to celebrate its 125th

anniversary by forwarding a sizeable check to Gettysburg a month or so ago.

In every case, whether the gift is one dollar or many dollars, I send a personal note of appreciation. I hope I am speaking for each of you when I remind them that their gifts are gratefully received by students whose tuition, for example, covers only 15.3 percent of our revenues. Even church funds (ELCA and synods, provide less than 40 percent of operating costs.

I sometimes have the feeling, though, that my "thank you" is perfunctory. I wish I could personalize each note. There ought to be a better way of communicating how crucial it is to each of you that there is that host of generous benefactors out there who help us carry out our mission. I shall try, for in the larger sense they make all that we do here possible. Please pray with me for them.

J. Russell Hale
Acting President

Are You Out There?

The Social Action Committee is in the midst of planning for the Spring semester and is running up against a major obstacle. Over the last few months we, as well as other groups on campus, have sponsored events dealing with social issues which have been poorly attended. Examples are the panel discussion on racism last fall, the Martin Luther King Day events this past January, the Dexheimer talk on El Salvador in February. As a committee we feel that the issues raised in these events are important ones that deal with the proclamation of the gospel wherever we plan to serve in the future. However, the community's lack of response to the events seems to communicate two things. The first is that the issues are not viewed as relevant to ministry or our life here together. The second is that it is not important to come together as a community to dialogue. In order to plan for the next months we would like your response to our reflections. If you have attended, please let us know your reactions to the events. If you did not attend, we would be interested in knowing what factors played in your decision not to attend. You can use Table Talk as a forum for your response or do so privately by putting your responses in the mail box of the chairperson of the committee, Cindy Rasschaert. The Social Action Committee

Low Pay Ministry

Response One

Amen to president Hale's letter! I found it truly inspiring. All of us preparing for ministry need to continually evaluate why we are here. If we are not here to serve the Lord we are certainly in the wrong place. Granted, service to the Lord takes on many shapes and forms and I would not want to put down those who feel called to serve middle and upper class communities. Yet, I believe that the example Jesus sets before us is one of caring for the poor and outcasts of our society.

I understand that for many in this affluent country the concept of caring for people rather than money and the things it can buy is a strange idea. While still in my undergraduate days I gave strong consideration to the Peace Corps. Ultimately I decided it was not for me since I find language study very difficult. Yet, I still wanted to serve. I had remembered having heard of a program called Vista (Volunteers in Service to America). When I checked into it I found that this program was no longer in existence. Meanwhile friends and family continued to tell me that I was crazy. After all my undergraduate degree cost more than \$40,000 and that in itself should entitle me to some rewards. Unfortunately I started to buy into this concept.

It was after I had been in the working world for some time that I had heard about the Lutheran Volunteer Corps (a Vista type program) and by this time I was not as sure of my commitment. Just this year I heard that the Jesuits offer a similar program in which a fellow student has served. I suppose that these organizations suggest that the ideals of Camelot are not completely dead.

CONTINUED

Response Two

It was most disturbing to read the February "President's Letter" concerning "Low Pay Ministry." How did we as the church ever get ourselves into a position where declining to lust after comfort, prestige, and rank is viewed as an aberration? As a child of the 60's I too wax nostalgic for the revolutionary fervor of those times, for the marching and the youthful enthusiasm, but must admit that a "call to arms" doesn't much move me anymore.

Maybe a new story is needed. Or perhaps an old one will suffice --remember those Saturday matinees in which the female lead falls head over heels in love with her "knight in shining armor." leaves everything behind and joyously faces hardship and danger to live forever with the one she loves? Her passionate and perhaps foolish love renders her oblivious to her circumstances. Her eyes are only for her Beloved.

I wonder if we have forgotten what it means to fall in love with The One Who Loved Us First. Hosea tells of the Beloved of the Soul who seduces us in the desert and whispers deeply into our heart. What would it be like if we stopped long enough to listen? Do we give our "relationship" a chance? What would happen if we allowed ourselves the opportunity to fall deeply in love with the one who relentlessly pursues us, e.g., if we took time to pray?

Marching for some holy cause may not capture our imagination anymore. But might we dare to enter into a passionate embrace with the Holy One and begin the mysterious Eternal Dance with no concern for where it might lead? It just might be fun to fall in love again!

Nancy Eggert

Seizing Opportunities

My personal story is one of struggle when it comes to wealth and its use. During the five years between college and my arrival at seminary I held a great variety of jobs, many in the education field and some paying below minimum wage. Yet, I also held positions where after taxes I was bringing home more than I needed. I must admit that I rather enjoyed not having to worry where my next meal was coming from or if I would have enough money to pay my rent.

Still I cannot ignore my brothers and sisters in Christ who have less than I or brothers and sisters who are ill. I believe this to be the call of the Gospel. More than likely, my first call will be to a low income urban area, since that is where I feel called.

I think that President Hale's suggestion that we create a special Order of Evangelists is one that has merit. Yet, I see it primarily as an organizational framework. There may be other ways of providing ministry to the poor in this country as well as in other countries. Because of the newness of the ELCA I do not really know of its plans to serve such peoples. I would hope there that the ELCA would have some sort of national program for full-time parish pastors. Naturally that too would have its limitations but we must remember that we live in an imperfect world.

Finally, let us remember that whatever a pastor or associate in ministry gets paid is their money to do with as they please. If a church professional feels called to live with less, he or she may do so by making larger donations to the individual congregation or any other number of worthy projects.

Valerie G. Horlacher

Seminary affords us many opportunities to learn about our God, our neighbor and ourselves. I want you to consider an opportunity uniquely offered by Gettysburg, that is the chance to study in Washington and to live at the House of Studies.

For those who are not tied to Gettysburg because of family or job, the chance to live in the nation's capital is indescribable. I am not going to try to tell you it is Utopia. The city has many problems or possibilities depending on your perspective. For those who cannot live here, to study in D.C. is still an option on consortium day. I have been told that great relationships develop while sitting in traffic on 270.

While students from Germany were visiting the house, they asked me how I keep my Lutheran identity studying at so many different schools. I could only say that because I am studying at these different schools I have had to sharpen my definition of Lutheranism. I have also had to do a lot of faith searching so I could better defend and explain what and how I believe.

I have had the chance to take a preaching course at Howard. What better way to learn a style of preaching? You can design your classes to select the best from each tradition and still fulfill Gettysburg requirements. Not every class will be one to write home about, but realistically, who would ever expect them to be.

I hope that this year's Junior class decides to avail themselves of this great chance to see D.C. and study at the various seminaries here. If anyone would like to talk with me or any of the students here, please feel free to call at 202-832-1729. Please think it over and give D.C. a try.

Nancy Ruckert



Poetry

Person

by Brian A. McClinton

CANDLECARING

I.

Flickering tears
light my face
falling
down.

II.

Encouraging fires
burn away my pains.

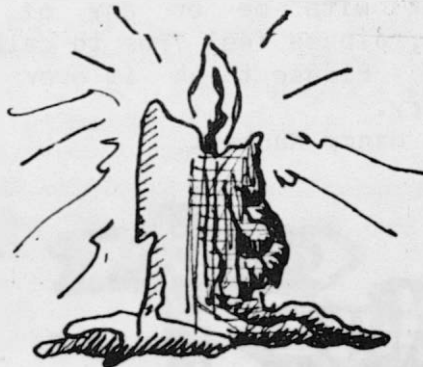
.III.

Shining smiles
share cares
of lives together.

IV.

God
turns on
the lights for
candlecaring.

Solveig R. Wilkinson



You have no right to call me names
You have no right to talk behind my back
You have no right to make fun of me
For the knowledge that I lack

Don't try to talk "like me"
Because I sound "like you"
Don't try to put me in a class
I've never been in
Don't try to do favors for me
Because I don't want any...
Unless you are a friend

You have no right to exclude me
Because I do not act the way
You think I should
You have no right to think I'm not
Who I am even though you think you would
I am just like you: a person
Someone that has interests that may not
Correlate with you're thinking
Let me be me: there is only one reason
It's the best thing I can do

FREE

Unshackled
and
set loose,
freedom's heart
affirms
her
liberties
and
pledges.
r i e
c a v.
e t
freshness
for
new journeys.

Solveig R. Wilkinson



WINTER RAINBOW

Sun,
surrounded by
cold air
with colorful
dancing
rays,
blazes
its
winter rainbow.

Solveig R. Wilkinson

An Eight Year Lectionary?

5.

A friend visited me here at seminary and asked a simple question: "How do you choose which scriptures you use for church?" I explained the lectionary and she went nuts! "The national church has such control? Where does the church get off limiting people to their favorite scriptures! What do they censor? Why do you put up with this?"

I responded with the usual argument that the lectionary forces pastors to deal with Christ's entire ministry and the major themes of the Bible rather than one's own pet views. She blew me out of the water when she asked how often I have heard a pastor deviate from the lectionary (once) and pointed out that that itself shows huge control that she would not put up with.

Actually I had been thinking along those lines for a while, but I had never considered it undue control. Now when I consider all of the ramifications I see the huge amount of censorship going on; especially concerning the Hebrew Scriptures.

In three years there are about 156 reading opportunities in normal church services. The Gospels have 3,733 verses so they average 24 verses per reading opportunity. The Epistles with 4,224 verses average 27 verses per reading opportunity. The Hebrew Scriptures, not including the Psalms, with 20,025 verses average a gigantic 128 verses per reading opportunity! We rarely read anywhere near 24 verses for the Gospel lesson each Sunday nor do we read much more than one-tenth of the 128 verse average for the Hebrew Scriptures any Sunday. Portions of the Gospels are ignored and larger portions of the Epistles are never heard by most parishioners. The vast mass of the Hebrew Scriptures is gone! How could the church do such a thing? Obadiah, Nahum,

Haggai, 2nd Chronicles, Ezra, Judges, Nehemiah, and the Song of Solomon are not even in the three year major festival ELCA lectionary! Aside from Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, and Jeremiah (my favorites also) most of the other books are touched less than five times each!

This must be changed. An eight year lectionary would be a start. Continue to have the Psalm and three lessons each Sunday. The practice of centering each church year on Christ's life as presented by one of the Gospels should also be continued; thereby making it possible to give John its own two years instead of interspersing John throughout the three year lectionary. Since each Gospel year would be listed and repeated the readings should be altered in the repeated years enough so that every verse of each Gospel is heard at least once. The rest of the New Testament could also be heard at least once in an eight year span if large sections are not repeated.

The Hebrew Scriptures still present a problem. I do agree that some parts of the Hebrew Scriptures need not be heard such as the genealogies. But still eight years of lessons from the Hebrew Scriptures would allow for huge portions to be skipped. We are not going to read over 48 verses of Hebrew Scriptures each Sunday. Censorship will have to be watched. Yes; the Song of Solomon, which many people do not know is in the Bible, should be included and hopefully interpreted appropriately; which could be interesting. The themes of breaking of Covenant, judgement followed by mercy, and God's societal wide word needs more play time rather than concentrating almost solely on supposed prophecies concerning Christ.

I find the Hebrew Scriptures essential to more fully understand God's word concerning institutional religion's, governmental, and

CONTINUED

LECTIONARY CONTINUED

individual responsibility. The Hebrew Scriptures are a record of God's work in the world and must not be ignored just because one prefers His work in New Testament times.

In the mean time, what should one do with the three year lectionary? Personally I already adjust the lessons to include what I determine to be the minimum unit boundaries. I see no problem in changing the lessons from the Hebrew Scriptures to go through different books in a systematic fashion to expose people to them. But, how would the individual church, synod, and national church react since this is not specifically sanctioned by the ELCA? Until the Hebrew Scriptures are more fully officially read in church services I see no other choice.

Jeff Milsten

Simple Living

On February 19, 1990, Tom Sine founder of Community for New Beginnings came to the seminary. Tom is the author of The Mustard Seed Conspiracy and Why Settle for More and Miss the Best? He met with interested students in the coffee shop for two hours. Among the topics of discussion were simpler life styles and teaching children that consumerism is not the way to happiness. He also spoke of spirituality, and that is aided by a simpler life style. He believes in spiritual direction and an active prayer life. Tom, who hails from Seattle, Washington, tours and speaks to various organizations throughout the country. Those who were fortunate enough to hear him can begin a process of seeking out ways to simplify their lives. As Tom said, "It's a life long journey. There is always a new and different way to simplify one's life. And it is exciting."

Phyllis Pelletier



Homard Americanus

Growth for me has often been a very difficult and painful process. One of the great teachers I have had has been the Homard americanus, otherwise known as the Maine lobster. This remarkable creature, which has a very hard ectoskeleton, proves to be a good role model. Twice a year, this crustacean molts, that is it completely loses its outer shell. It needs to do this in order to grow. Just before the growth spurt, its meat begins to press against the inside of the shell pushing out and its shell becomes extremely hard. At this point they are the least flavorful although many prefer them because of the fullness of the shells. When they can no longer grow, the shell begins to split dorsally and the lobster emerges. It then seeks to burrow in the ocean bottom in an effort to escape predators. They bury themselves knowing that soon the creatine production will begin and a new shell will be formed. When the shell is formed it is quite soft. At this point the lobsters are as flavorful as they will ever be.

That is the lesson I must learn. I must be willing to completely shed the old and be vulnerable in order to grow. I must be willing to be vulnerable in order to be less hardened. The outer shell has been hard to shed, and I have often been afraid to shed it. Growth is always frightening. The price is always high. The results are always worth it.

Phyllis Pelletier

The Case of the Clerical Collar

Should seminary students wear clerical collars? While this may be a question of adiaphora, it leads to issues that are at the center of our Lutheran identity.

Last summer, at my CPE sight, a classmate of mine wore a clerical collar when she lead chapel services or visited a new resident. (Three out of the five of us wore clerics at some point during the program.). The problem was that this person had just received an MAR degree and had no intention of ever being ordained. She simply wore the shirt to be identified as chaplin in specific situations. Why should this be a problem? I was not ordained and I wore a collar when I preached in chapel. Does intent of ordination make a difference?

Last month, during a retreat to prepare for internship, a pastor from my synod spoke out against interns wearing clerics. She said that we (students) are not to be seen as pastors and it was to our benefit, as well as in the congregation's best interest, not to confuse the two.

I have heard that wearing a clerical collar is good for free liquor on airplanes and getting out of traffic tickets. Is this right? Are we (ordained or not) abusing a privilege? Those shirts with the funny neck are a sign of a public office. They are probably more recognizable as a sign of ordination than the stoles that are worn at our services.

What is the responsibility that goes along with this shirt? Can students be accused of impersonating an ordained clergyperson? Is the collar a right or a privilege?

I am aware of the advantages of wearing a collar when going out to

supply preach. (The student needs to be recognized as "The Pastor of the Week".) This brings us to a more fundamental issue. If students are allowed to preach in our churches, why aren't they allowed to preside over Eucharist? Does the shirt give us the authority of the Word but not the Sacrament? Are Word and Sacrament equal? These are issues that must be discussed and decided by the church at large.

Two years ago there was a senior who wore clerics every day to class. Occasionally, he wore a full black cassock. This man went so far as to have a clerical collar made for his seven year old son. I felt that this was an abuse of the office that is represented by these clothes.

If the situation calls for a student to be recognized as a pastor-in-training, then let us decide on an alternative form of identification. Perhaps a collar with a cross on it. We are not yet ordained. We must be very careful to insure that we are not perceived as such.

Miriam Nicholson

Knowledge and Ignorance

Perhaps you have heard it said, "Knowledge is power." This is a interesting equation if it is true. The more one knows, the more mighty and formidable one becomes. Although it does not necessarily follow that the relatively ignorant among us are powerless, the tendency for the forewarned and forearmed to make the uninformed subservient to their wishes seems to be played out often enough to give some credence to this proverb.

Perhaps you have heard it said, "Ignorance is bliss." This also is interesting. One can wonder who this saying stands up in the day to day tragedies of life. When a small child finds a loaded pistol and innocently mistakes it for a new and peculiar plaything, and subsequently shoots one of the

CONTINUED



Knowledge and Ignorance CONTINUED

parents, can anyone truly say that not knowing is better than knowing? "If the parents had known better. . .," we say. "If the child could have known, such a thing would not have happened," we say.

Knowing is usually looked upon as being more beneficial than not knowing. Dare I say that the pursuit of knowledge has become so idolized that there is little that we consider not worth knowing, and we would hardly think to make our decision until we knew what it was we had the choice to reject.

Our quest for ever greater knowledge only tells us with growing clarity the reality of our ignorance. After each new understanding, after each new tidbit, we look back with dismay, even repugnance, upon those who have not struggled as far as we have. They, not having worked as diligently, do not even know the depths of OUR ignorance!

Are there moments, when based upon what one already understands, it would be more ethical NOT to know anything further? Are there areas of knowledge which should not be explored? This is not a matter of "playing dumb." Instead it would be a one of saying, "We are curious, but in this case, ignorance is bliss."

I offer a short case study to illustrate: Suppose there is a team of scientists and researchers who set out to find the world's oldest continuously living thing. As fortune would have it, these men and women find what they believe is that one thing. It happens to be a tree. They know enough to determine the age of this tree to be on the order of 4,900 years. They also have the tools and ability to date this tree accurately, but such a level of certainty requires that tree be damaged. Is it better to know with greater certainty or leave well enough alone?

The tree I refer to, a certain

8.
bistlecone pine, was actually found by a group of hard working, and I assume, astute people. These Forest Service researchers made the choice for knowledge, and cut the pine down. When should that which is known remain all that is known? You decide.

By Brian Lee Rossow



How many of you have noticed the wooden sculpture on the north side of the Gritsch's house? I look for it every time I drive by on Springs Avenue. No, it is not a short Totem pole. It is a Tiki: a wooden image of a Polynesian supernatural power.

The Gritsch's acquired this statue several years ago from a student who had received it as gift. Evidently, he didn't know what to do with it after he had returned from his internship. Oddly enough, this internship site was nowhere near Polynesia. It was in upstate New York and he just happened to rent a room from a man who collected these statues.

This Tiki sits on the stump of a Civil War era tree that was blown over in a big wind storm three years ago. The Tiki appears to be a part of the original tree. This is an appropriate pedestal since it stares down at the cannon in front of the Singmaster house.

The next time you walk down Confederate Avenue, if you have an uneasy feeling that you are being watched, now you will know why. The Tiki may be gazing at you.

Miriam Nicholson