

# TABLET

Volume 26 #3  
DECEMBER '90

To end male violence men must take the initiative

EVERY DAY IS FARM AND RIGHTS DAY  
JOBS WITH PEACE

Free the Kids

BREAD NOT BOMBS

Give Back the Earth

IF YOU THINK THE SYSTEM IS WORKING ASK SOMEONE WHO ISN'T

Think Globally Act Locally

WOMEN UNITE TAKE BACK THE NIGHT

HELP FIGHT CANCER END ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

War is the real enemy.

PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT

ABOLISH APARTHEID

IF THE PEOPLE LEAD, EVENTUALLY THE LEADERS WILL FOLLOW.

FARMS NOT ARMS

WE ALL LIVE DOWN WIND

"LIVE SIMPLY THAT OTHERS MAY SIMPLY LIVE."

teach PEACE and JUSTICE in Central America

WAGE PEACE

T PEACE JUSTICE

ARMS ARE FOR HUGGING

IF YOU WORK

PEACE THRU EQUALITY STOP SEXISM & RACISM

Challenge Authority

CHILD CARE NOT WAR FARE

HEALTH CARE IS A RIGHT NOT A PRIVILEGE

CONSERVATION IS SURVIVAL

no nukes

Better active today than radioactive tomorrow

IN EVERY WAR THERE'S A PERSONA WAITING TO HAPPEN

FIGHT AIDS NOT PEOPLE WITH AIDS

BUY WAR TOYS

if she says NO it's rape.

FLUNK HILL CHATREDE

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TABLE TALK is a public forum for news, viewpoints, and opinions of students and other folks from LTESG. Please feel free to express your thoughts and ideas. Poetry and artwork will be considered, along with letters, book and movie reviews, and manuscripts dealing with assorted topics. All articles must be submitted with author's name; however, upon request and in consultation with the editorial staff, name may be withheld in certain circumstances.

Please submit all material typed, and single-spaced. Please proofread all material submitted.

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WAR  
by Bob Crabb

"The means of war is force, applied in the form of organized violence. It is through the use of violence...that we compel our enemy to do our will. (V)iolence is an essential element of war, and its immediate result is bloodshed, destruction, and suffering. While the magnitude of violence may vary with the object and means of war, the violent essence of war will never change.... Thus, the object of war is to impose our will on our enemy. The means to that end is the organized application or threat of violence by military force."<sup>1</sup> This definition is apparently driving U.S. policy in the Middle East crisis today. What do you think? Do you like it? Find it disgusting? What does it do for you?

The events in the Middle East, as elsewhere, continue to call us as baptized Christians to examine the role of the Church in relation to the nature of war. It seems to me, we are not taking seriously the idea that our nation is on the brink of war. As the rhetoric and preparation for war increases, a lot of us seem to be passive observers of the direction in which our country is going. At our seminary, the mention of war does not seem to draw any reaction at all. I think our education here should include a discussion on the Church's role in a nation considering war. Does the Church have any relevance in this situation? I would say in terms of this present crises that the Church has been entirely irrelevant. We are a nation and a Church concerned with Gas, Beauty, Drugs and Food.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps our ambivalence is due to a lack of understanding of war. At Gettysburg, we are in the middle of a battlefield where people fought and died in three days of fighting. This is as good of place as any to learn something about war.

It was in late June, 1863, a few days before the battle, that the Army of the Potomac started its march to Gettysburg from Fredericksburg, VA and points south. As the battle began, the march took on an extreme sense of urgency. For many units, the march began every morning at 5:30 and continued until 9:30 at night - until they reached Gettysburg. This was what is called a forced march, that is, a march at as fast a pace as possible. If you have never been in a forced march before this is what it is like. The officers are usually in the front or at the sides of two or more columns of enlisted infantry. Noncommissioned officers are wherever they want to be. Troops closest to the front of the columns are walking, those in the rear often have to double time to keep up. The enlisted load of food, weapons, ammunition, water, and other equipment is in excess of 110 lbs.

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<sup>1</sup>.Marine Corps Warfighting Manual, (MCCDC, 1989), pp. 2 and 12.

<sup>2</sup>See Shalini S. Venturelli, "Reversing the Tower of Babel", The Cresset, 54 (Nov 90): 15.

Most of time the march starts out with someone singing cadence, but as the march progresses and fatigue and pain sets in, singing stops. The NCO's, the backbone of the army, become demons, exhorting, encouraging, screaming, cursing, and sometimes, physically assaulting the troops who cannot keep up. Those that cannot keep up are either carried by the troops that can still march (along with their equipment) or their equipment is stripped and they are left for the corpsmen. In June/July, 1863 the heat and humidity were high, heat casualties were deadly, many heat related deaths occurred, but the march went on, and as always, the mission came first, even over human lives.

You can find out about the battle on your own, but here is a description of part of the battle by an eye witness. This description is of the climax of Pickett's charge, as the Confederates breach the Union lines. Some of the Union reinforcements in the description have just come up from the Washington, DC area (90 miles away) by forced march.

"Panting and shouting, the Union reinforcements converge at the scene of the breakthrough.... Men fire into each other's faces, not five feet apart. There are bayonet thrusts, saber strokes, pistol shots; cool, deliberate movements on the part of some - hot, passionate, desperate efforts with others; hand-to-hand contests; recklessness of life; tenacity of purpose; fiery determination; oaths, yells, curses, hurrahs, shoutings; men going down on their hands and knees, spinning round like tops, throwing out their arms, gulping up blood, falling-legless, armless, headless. There are ghastly heaps of dead men. Seconds, are centuries, minutes, are ages.... The Rebel column has lost its power. The (Rebel) soldiers alive in the front ranks look around for their supports (and find none). The ground is thick with dead..."<sup>3</sup>

In three days of combat there were 51,000 casualties at Gettysburg (at Antietam there were 30,000 casualties in only one day of fighting). This is a glimpse of what may be looming ahead. Are we taking war seriously? What are possible options for Christian response? Prayer is a start. But how should we pray? Should we pray for peace at any cost? Should we pray for victory in a just war? Is it ok to say that we don't have any answers and then turn the whole thing over to God? Are there other options for Christian response? What is the Church's responsibility?

It is amazing to me that we have a God who continues to say to humankind after Golgotha, Gettysburg, and countless wars and atrocities, "Come home, the Feast is Ready"!

What do you think?

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<sup>3</sup>Richard Wheeler, Witness to Gettysburg, (Harper & Row, 1987), p. 243

# HOMOSEXUALITY: TWO ISSUES

This article is in response to Wendi Gordon's article on homosexuality in a recent edition of TABLE TALK.

In part I felt the need to respond because this article, like far too many other articles I have read, confuses two completely separate issues. These two issues are whether homosexuality is a sin, and the response that many Christians make to gay or lesbian persons. Although Wendi's article makes note of both of these issues, it also muddles them together, with the result that, once again, there is little possibility of anything being heard.

Although scriptural references are not mentioned in the article until nearly the middle, I will deal with that at this point (admittedly in an incomplete manner) and will limit myself to two references. In I Cor. 6:9-10 Paul gives the people of Corinth a list of wrongful actions, or more precisely, a list of people engaged in wrongful acts. This list includes two references to homosexuality: those who allow themselves to be used in such a way and those who perform such acts. As Wendi's article rightly points out, scripture used out of context can, and has, been used to justify almost anything. In this case, however, homosexual acts are quite clearly cast in a negative light. Paul concludes this list by writing, "And this is what some of you used to be (my emphasis). But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (NRSV translation). The second reference I will look to is Romans 1:26-27. The context here is God's wrath toward humanity's continuing disobedience. "For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another" (NRSV translation). Of this passage Paul Achtemeier writes in his commentary on Romans, "The violation of the created order in human sexuality is therefore, as Paul understands it, an outgrowth of the violation of the created order, a violation whose root lies in idolatry. [This] cannot be understood as an alternate life-style, somehow also acceptable to God" (Interpretation Bible Commentary, Romans, p.40). Of key importance in both of these texts is the fact that it is homosexual activity that is condemned. Love of brother for brother, or sister for sister, in a deep and caring commitment is a part of God's creating humanity in community; this kind of relationship is positive and part of God's will. What is condemned is when homosexual activity becomes a part of that relationship. Both of these passages, taken in context, clearly have extremely negative views of homosexual activity. Such activity is a misuse of God's gift and, as pointed out above, a form of idolatry. Moreover, this is not simply a matter of the birth rate as suggested in the article, but is seen as fundamental to the order of creation

itself. Now, interpretation may certainly be made of these passages, (e.g. that this was referring to specific abuses of homosexuality, and not homosexuality per se) or the passages may simply be rejected as only applying to Paul's time, but one should be extremely clear that these are, indeed, interpretations.

I do not have the space in this article for a refutation of each point in the opposing article so I will only deal with specific items. First the issue of choice. The article points out that no-one would choose homosexuality simply because of all the pain that comes with such an orientation. One need only to look at statistics and accounts of battered spouses returning again and again to the source of their abuse to realize that humans often do voluntarily choose that which is harmful. Drug abuse also comes to mind; why do people continue to smoke tobacco, continue to use cocaine and other drugs when use is so evidently harmful? There can be many, many other examples. This is all evidence of the reality of sin in the world. Here I do not speak just of sin as act, but the fact that we live in a world broken by sin, a world where things are not as they should be, as God intended them to be. A world where human beings are fully caught up in their own desires and their own selfishness.

Discussion of choice often leads to orientation, but here again I see a great difficulty. Medical science is showing more and more clearly that alcoholism is inheritable. That is, that someone, through his or her genes, may have a predilection toward inability to control the use of alcohol. Does this therefore mean that, should I be such a person, I have a God-given right to be an alcoholic? I do not think so. But then one need not be so specific. It is hardly a secret that humanity is seen as having a predilection away from God. (Augustine comes to mind, having just been studying him.) That's right! Humanity is oriented toward sin. All kinds of sin, big sin, little sin, physical sin, intellectual sin, lots of sin -and all of it equally damning, equally wrong. All of humanity equally guilty before God.

This is a good point at which to bring up the second main issue that Wendi's article points out. The equality of sin. It is a terrible, tragic, sinful thing that in so many ways homosexuality is held up to be somehow more wrong than any other sin and that those who are affected by homosexuality are so often denied love and care by their brothers and sisters in Christ. The Church must include, care for, and love all sinners, for all humanity falls into this category. (In fact, the Church is active in this regard, if one cares to look for anything positive. Witness

the many articles consistently written about such work in The Lutheran, for one example.) Certainly heterosexual relationships can also be destructive and abusive. Certainly heterosexual persons can engage in meaningless physical relationships that are immoral. Such relationships are also sinful and these actions must be condemned by the Church, as they are by scripture. But here, as with all sin, it is the actions that must be condemned, not the people. For Christ did indeed die for all people, that all humanity might have life. Is this really the easier path as Wendi's article suggests? I do not think so. The easiest path for the Church to take would be by popular vote. Take a census, see what the majority of people like or find attractive at the time, and institute it as policy. That would at least offend the smallest number of people. That would indeed be easy and comfortable. Instead the Church has the incredibly difficult task of speaking the gospel to the world; that is, the reality of humanity's sinfulness and the need, and the reality, of Jesus Christ's offensive, bloody death on the cross and his life-giving resurrection. This is the difficult task; in fact, it would be completely impossible without the guidance and power of God's Spirit. Sin is offensive, yet sin is a reality in our lives. I do not like to hear that when I hoard my money, or when I treat as mine the gifts that I have been given, that I am being sinful, yet this is a reality; as a child of God I am called to give up all that I have for the sake of my neighbor. Do I always do that? No. Am I a sinful person? You bet. Do I desperately need Christ as my Lord and Master? I am nothing without Him! It is God's will for us as his children, and his love for all people, that is fundamental here, not my wants or what I decide is best.

Yes, Wendi, I do see homosexuality as a sin, based on my understanding of scripture and what my Church professes, and I will continue to stand here until someone proves me wrong through scripture. Will I therefore condemn gay or lesbian persons, or treat homosexual acts as being worse than any other sin? By the help of God I will not. Just as I see greed and selfishness as a sinful lifestyle but do not withhold my ministry from those who give less than eight or ten percent, so I will not withhold my ministry from any child of God because of their sin. I will continue to do all I can to minister to, and be ministered by, all my brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, through His power and guidance.

Jonathan Vogel

# COMMENTARY...

Ken Alan Grant

This semester I have been confronted with far too much time to contemplate issues and ideas, be it contemplating why Pope Gregory VII went about reforming the Church the way he did (the subject of my thesis, which will be done in January, if you care to know more about the subject), to contemplating why the U.S. government won't bother to govern, but instead merely panders to the public and the special interest groups. I've also contemplated how the two are related, as I am quite sure that they are. I mean really, if simony in the Middle Ages is not the same thing as politicians winning elections in this country is then I'll eat my hat.

But this is hardly the focus of this commentary. This commentary is focused on the need for this community to understand that controversy is not always a bad thing, and that it is time to stop fearing controversy. By saying this I am not advocating controversy for controversy sake. This is not the type of controversy that I am talking about, the type that I am speaking of is type of controversy that deals with the intelligent debate over issues of importance to us a community.

Too often, recently, I have heard the bemoaning of a lack of community at this school. It exists, just not in the way some would like to exist, and if it did I would bet 10 to 1 that those same people would complain about the apathy and the lack of interest on campus. For it is my opinion that a pure, safe, and cozy community is a myth and is in fact not healthy for our campus. A community without controversy is a dull place, and worse yet it is a community that does not grow because it is never challenged. A safe community without controversy stagnates and will probably die, to me its that simple.

History is full of examples of dramatic change due to the controversy that pops up because of people living together, and that's good, for that is how we grow and progress. History is rife with lessons of how controversies have changed the course of our world, and that from the changes we have grown. It is not always positive growth to be sure, but it is movement nonetheless, and it is necessary. Some examples, as listed by Harold Berman, are: the Russian, French, and American Revolutions, as well as the English Revolution, the Protestant Reformation, and the Papal Revolution of 1075-1122 (otherwise known as the Gregorian Reforms or the Investiture Controversy). All of these monumental upheavals of the existing order are examples of what controversy can bring, and with these controversies came growth. I'll not go into the gory details now, and that kind of discourse is not the point I am trying to make, I am merely showing what controversy can bring. It is not always pretty, but it is definitely interesting, and it definitely keeps us on our toes.

By now you are probably wondering what my point is, it is this, do not fear the problems that hit our community, for they are a necessary part of our existence here, as they will be no matter where you live after you leave here. Do not fear the problems, work on solutions for them, as has been done so ably here this year. Do not fear differing opinions, they are necessary as well. Respond, don't react, to these opinions and you will be amazed at the progress we can achieve.



A THANK YOU TO THE COMMUNITY

I would like to thank the many persons who expressed their support for the Social Action Committee's theme for November. I would also like to thank the persons who expressed their continuing struggle to organize their feelings toward homosexual people. The committee realized that we were tackling a controversial subject that would elicit strong emotions on both sides of the issue. But I feel that the committee was successful in circulating another side of the issue than the all too familiar "traditional" religious condemnation of homosexuality. Sexuality has an awesome potential for destruction as well as construction. The same can be said about the attitudes of religious leaders.

The issue of homosexuality hit home to me during CPE this past summer. I was involved in ministry to AIDS patients and this was a very moving experience for me. What made me the angriest was the refusal of certain pastors to officiate at the funerals of homosexual members who had died of AIDS. Some pastors would not even visit the person in the hospital or offer support to the person's family or significant other. I did not see Christ in the actions of these pastors and I felt a certain responsibility to help ensure that graduates of Gettysburg Lutheran would not treat their congregation's homosexual members in a similar fashion. Because I had heard several homophobic statements made last year by a few individuals, I knew that this task would not be easy. But Brian Smith and all the members of the Social Action Committee supported my efforts and for that I am grateful.

I hope that at least one person's outlook may have been influenced toward a more sympathetic and less destructive stance toward gays, lesbians, and bisexuals whom we will encounter in our individual ministries. Unfortunately, I am afraid that the persons who most needed to hear an alternate point of view did not attend the Committee's events. This greatly saddens me, but I have hope that in the future these persons will meet and get to know friends who are homosexual or will continue to search out more inclusive information. The suggestion for an open forum was an excellent one. Unfortunately, our time was limited during the month of November. But I will personally recommend that the Social Action Committee tackle this issue again in the future and arrange to hold an open forum next year.

- Marie Krueger

ADVENT ALLELUIAS

Through the power of the Spirit,  
greatness touched  
the Virgin Mary.

Through the power of the Spirit,  
God became  
the Emmanuel.

Through the power of the Spirit,  
friendships grow  
among the people.

Through the power of the Spirit,  
joy leaped,  
causing me to share:

Advent  
Alleluias  
All-powerfully

Waiting  
Wondrously  
With Hope

Enjoying  
Excited  
Exclamations

to make ready for the Lord!

. . .based on Luke 1:39-45

Solveig R. Wilkinson

LOGOS

Fear hugged the darkness--  
Awe tugged in brightness--  
focusing upon  
the Christ child.

Night turned into day--  
Love became the Way--  
revealing the Truth  
and the Light.

God's story is life--  
His glory shines bright--  
fulfilling timeless  
prophecy.

Christmas brings the Gift--  
Creation's uplift--  
presenting the Light  
totally  
unwrapped  
now!

. . .based on John 1:1-5

Solveig R. Wilkinson

**CHRISTMAS-RESURRECTION!**

Shadows pass and complement the manger crib tonight  
While lights and sounds reveal the truth  
of new birth soon to come.

Candles flare and flicker by the manger bed  
While silhouettes of the cross  
show the hope to come.

Bethlehem and Golgotha parallel each other  
While pain and joy discover the  
Christmas-Resurrection!

Alleluia!  
Jesus is born!  
Our Savior comes!

Alleluia!  
Christ is risen!  
Salvation's here!

Solveig R. Wilkinson



FEAR FUELS HATRED  
BREEDS WAR FEEDS WAR

EVERY DAY IS EARTH DAY



a merry Christmas  
to all  
from the  
Table Talk  
staff!

IF WE CAN RISK NUCLEAR WAR  
WE CAN RISK  
DISARMAMENT



WOMEN AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

BE ALL YOU CAN BE  
WORK FOR PEACE



PEACE ON EARTH  
BEGINS AT HOME  
end domestic abuse

SAVE THE  
RAINFORESTS



NO ONE IS FREE  
WHEN OTHERS  
ARE OPPRESSED



NUCLEAR WEAPONS  
MAY THEY RUST IN PEACE



JOBS JUSTICE DEMOCRACY

Enough

Next deadline is 15 Jan, 1991!

ASK YOURSELF QUESTIONS!