



Table

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Table



... and
Born of
the Virgin Mary...

Table Talk is published monthly by students at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. The views and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the editorial staff, the student association, or the seminary.

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Greetings from the Publications Committee,

Students are scurrying to finish final papers and to prepare for final exams. Christmas trees, decorations, lights and holiday anticipation are everywhere. This must mean only one thing (or two)! The fall semester is drawing to a close and the joyous celebration of our Lord's birth is nearing.

This is the final edition of Table Talk for 1992 and the fall semester. We want to thank all of those who have contributed their time and talent in so many ways, especially Linda for who we are deeply indebted. Take a break from studying and enjoy Table Talk. It is full of information from holiday greetings and poetry, to articles by regular contributors and an Around the Globe piece by Mwatumai Mwanjota.

The next edition of Table Talk will appear in February. We encourage everyone to submit material to share in this experience. Holiday gatherings and memories, and multi-cultural programs are two examples of what can be offered. The list is endless. This is YOUR Table Talk.

We wish and pray for a safe holiday to each of you as you celebrate our Lord's birth and enjoy time with family and friends. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Until next time...

Peace,

The Publications Committee

"prose from the pres"...and patti!

This term soon is ending..thanks be to the Lord
we're in "last-two-week-crisis"..then spirits can soar
As for fifteen or sixteen just glorious days
with no thought of papers or brain matter gray
We'll eat, drink and be merry and spend too much dough
on kinfolk and others 'cause we love them so
But we wanted to tell you no matter how far
you travel away by plane, bus or car
You'll be every day in our prayers and our hearts
during all of these days when we are apart
We wish you a Christmas so filled with good cheer
you'll bring some to share when we see you next year!
Our wish for you all at this time is the same
May your Christmas and New Year burn bright as the flame
of the candles in windows whose warm glowing light
asks us all to remember what happened that night
Long ago in the stable of Bethlehem town
When the Lord sent to earth in a moment profound
The Babe who would bring us forgiveness of sin
Who would open his arms and ask all to come in
So please don't forget students/teachers alike
as families and we open gifts with delight
That the reason we really have Christmas at all
is because of that Babe placed by God in that stall.

Heri Ya Chrisimasi..Hyvaa Joulva..Frohe Weihnachten
..Joyeux Noel..Felice Navidad..Gelukkgig..
Merry Christmas

. . . SHALOM . . .

Bruce & Patti

FATHER

Out of the very depths of my being
I cry to thee, Abba.
Be for me.
Love me.
Hold me.

Give to me divinely what I have never had
humanly:
Thy unwavering hand to lead me.

Make for me a new father out of me.

Oh Glorious Triumph.
Peace permeating will.

ST

Prayer concern: Those from dysfunctional families that they may
find peace and reconciliation.

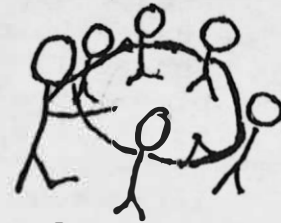
Around the Globe...



"Together - Pamoja"

By Mwatumai Mwanjota

Together, we are a rich tapestry and design. God created us to be in community. What does the Tanzanian community look like? The image of our community life is an image of a circular shape, not a hierarchy. The people of the community support one another in faith and life, as well as in common works and tasks. The community values are touched together in all of life, not individualism. People who have not experienced this kind of life may be disturbed by this portrayal of community. Our words say we value community, but our lives often deny it. No wonder it is always easier to speak, than to do. Many times, our desire is for personal assistance and affirmation.



As a community of believers, therefore, our community is more than collective individualism. In our community, we have to create identity, according to the faith we have: loving, supporting, lifting and encouraging one another in our daily life. The gift of love and grace from our loving God should be shared also with the wounded souls. Especially for the Christian community, this is the season of new life: Advent and Christmas. How have we prepared ourselves and our neighbors so that Jesus Christ is born in our hearts and in our neighbors?

Romans 15: "May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus."

Merry Christmas!!!

Mwatumai Mwanjota is a resident of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. Her husband Lyndend Peter Mwanjota is an administrative director with an architectural firm. They have four children: Telly Alex, 21; Lilli Anne, 15; Tom Jimmy, 10; and Milly Rose, 5. She will return to Tanzania after this year to complete a one-year internship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

November 20, 1992

Holiday Greetings to all!

In preparing to enter Gettysburg, many spoke to the exciting challenges of responding to His Call. In their wisdom, it was repeatedly noted that the new community would comprise many persons, possessing many "gifts of the Spirit," and all eager to form a meaningful contribution to serving the Lord. The new community would speak many languages, bear many burdens, and at times, introduce precepts contrary to one's present sphere of understanding. It would be critical to the commonwealth experience to grasp the richness of both the peoples and the traditions which Gettysburg Seminary represented.

With each day, whether through the experiences of class lectures, discussion groups, or casual conversation with faculty/staff or other seminarians, both the people and traditions continue to carry us into personally uncharted dimensions. In attempting to appreciate both the individual and the community, it is a continuing struggle to relinquish one's personal preferences for the good of others.

It is becoming increasingly noticeable that during lectures, when professors open the floor for questions, many students consider this courtesy as a time to chat with anyone around them. Many times, the question proposed by a student and the answer given by the professor are lost among the numerous conversations taking place throughout the room. We have been asked several times, in class and by our peers, to please try to refrain from this practice. Unfortunately, the requests have gone to little or no avail.

To expand on the above, and again with the intent to gain an appreciation of the community, when entering the chapel for services, the noise levels of conversations prior to and during the Prelude, seem to provoke an ever-increasing difficulty of hearing or appreciating the essence of the moment. Some people prefer the nave to be one of quiet preparation for worship, with most conversations quietly conducted in the narthex or in other areas of the buildings. Equally so, there are people who treat worship in a more celebratory manner, with conversation continuing right up to the time the pastor approaches with opening remarks. Each practice brings flavor to the worship experience.

In discussions on and off campus, there have been numerous offerings of explanation for these tendencies. While each may be very legitimate to a particular perspective, perhaps the struggle is with the imposition these actions are having on our piety. At what point do actions, while logical or appropriate to one's individual preferences or practices, become derogatory to the collective good.

In keeping with sensitivity to the total community, it would be helpful to gain insights which will lend a deeper awareness and meaning into these particular practices. Prayerfully consider these two areas of concern. In the course of daily participation in either setting, please ask how our actions may be imposing on those around us. If, in evaluation, the actions are those of courteousness and consideration of others, we thank you. For those who choose to continue, what some may perceive disruptive or intrusive conversational practices, perhaps lowering our voices to a whisper would afford all concerned the gratification of each respective experience. Efforts to bring about a cooperative understanding in these matters is deeply appreciated. We ask God's continued mercy and blessings upon the community .

Peace to all.

Matthew E. Jackson

BOOKMARKS

"Sharing" (CPE style) is not particularly appropriate to this column, but I'm about to "share" just a little as an introduction to this month's topic. The subject for this month is one I've been avoiding, because I resist being pigeonholed as the promulgator of a particular point of view simply because I possess certain physical characteristics. Despite the burgeoning mass of material available on the subject, I have been avoiding a column on feminist theology because I didn't want the column to be either dismissed or embraced because readers thought the author had an ax to grind either for or against their personal views. *Bookmarks* is intended to be neutral (though perhaps it doesn't always succeed).

That said, enter the controversial world of feminist theology. The term "feminist theology" can be vague, and the field is so large that even the most recent books cannot be covered in one column. So this month I will look at just one aspect of feminist theology (possibly the most controversial aspect), and that is the femininity of God.

The renewed popularity of Wicca (witchcraft) and rising interest in the Goddess religion¹ demonstrate how widespread interest in the feminine aspects of the godhead is now. *Goddesses in Religions and Modern Debate* (BL473 .5 G63 1990) contains essays on the history of Goddess traditions and on the modern issues. Joseph Campbell contributes his bit in *In All Her Names* (BL215 .5 I5 1991), which includes essays by Campbell, Riane Eisler (author of *The Chalice and the Blade*), and others. *The Goddess Remembered* is a video currently on order which was

produced by the same people who did *The Burning Times*, which was recently shown on campus. *Her Share of the Blessings*, by Ross Shepard Kraemer (BL625 .7 K73 1992) discusses the history of women's participation in religions featuring both male and female divinities.

From a specifically Christian viewpoint, a veritable cornucopia of tomes is available on the femininity of the Christian God. *God--His & Hers* (BT83 .55 M6513 1991) is interesting because it is co-authored by Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel and Jurgen Moltmann. They debate various aspects of Christianity from a consciously masculine and feminine perspective.

She Who Is by Elizabeth Johnson (BT83 .55 J64 1992) appears to be a major new work. Johnson discusses all aspects of the question, from language referring to God to the femininity of the Trinity. *Created in Her Image* by Eleanor Rae and Bernice Marie-Daly (BT153 M6R34 1990) deals with the same broad area.

Other works are less broad in scope. *Her Image of Salvation* by Gail Paterson Corrington (BL476 C6 1992) explores feminine imagery in early Christian soteriology. *The Feminine Face of God* by Sherry Ruth Anderson and Patricia Hopkins (BL625 .7 A5 1991) examines the feminine divine by relating women's stories of their personal searches for a meaningful spiritual life.

Just so you know that feminist theology is not new in the 20th century, *God is Our Mother: Julian of Norwich and the Medieval Image of Christian Feminine Divinity* by Jennifer P. Heimmel is found under the call number BV4831 J85H45 1982.

This book is criticism; the original work is Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*, found in the series *Classics of Western Spirituality* (BV4831 J8 1978).

Some authors are less radical than others, and some openly challenge the work of feminist theologians. Susanne Heine has written *Women and Early Christianity* and *Matriarchs, Goddesses, and Images of God* (the second under the call number BT83 .55 H4513 1989), both of which offer a moderated view of feminist theology and attempt to reconcile some of its perspectives with the wider Christian tradition. More critical is *Speaking the Christian God* (BT111 .2 S64 1992), a collection of essays by some very well-known theologians which critique feminist proposals for inclusive language about God.

A book which is not specifically about the femininity of God, but which deserves mention, is *Theology and Feminism* by Daphne Hampson (BT83 .55 H36 1990). This work offers some disturbing thoughts from a former Anglican theologian who has concluded that Christianity and feminism are incompatible.

There are scores of other works on this topic in the library. I have only mentioned some of the more interesting and some of the more recently published titles. Most of the classics in the field have not been mentioned; you may find them in bibliographies and by consulting faculty, the library, and other students. The broad topic of "feminist theology" covers works which have been written in every area of theology and each of the three divisions of the seminary curriculum. Some of the subject headings under which you will find books on the subject are:

Feminist theology

Femininity of God
Bible and feminism
Woman (Christian theology) --
Biblical teaching
Women -- Religious life
Women in church work

Also look under subject headings beginning with Woman, Women, Feminism, Sex role and Sexism.

New Arrivals

Just arrived and not quite on the shelves yet is *Gaia & God* by Rosemary Radford Ruether (BT695 .5 R83 1992), which ranges into the area of eco-feminism (a combination of two hot topics). Other new books on hot topics include *Lead Us Not Into Temptation* by Jason Berry (BX1912 B435 1992), which discusses child molestation by Roman Catholic priests, and *The Facts of Life* by Harold Morowitz and James Trefil (QM601 M768 1992), which lays out the medical facts about abortion.

Always ripe for controversy is a new book by John Shelby Spong. His latest is *Born of a Woman* (BT611 S66 1992) which examines the Gospel birth narratives, condemns a "literalist" interpretation of the Bible and the creeds, and blames some of the misogyny of our culture on the portrayal of Mary as ideal woman.

Mark Oldenburg has published his doctoral thesis on *The Evolution of Ordination Rituals in East Coast Lutheranism, 1703-1918* (BV664 .5 O42 1992). Those in his liturgy classes might be wise to check it out!

Of local interest is *The Gotwald Trial Revisited* by Luther A. Gotwald Jr. (BX8080 G67G67 1992). Luther A. Gotwald Sr., 1833-1900, a graduate of Gettysburg, was put on trial at Wittenberg College in 1893 for heresy, because he adhered too

strictly to the Lutheran confessions for the taste of that General Synod school.

For light reading, you may find *After the Fire* by Randy Testa (F157 L2T47 1992) interesting. Testa spent a summer living with an Amish family in Lancaster County, and he writes about the problems caused by the rapid growth in the area and the real possibility that the Amish will leave Pennsylvania.

Tamara E. Riegel

1. I use the term "Goddess religion" very broadly. If you ask 10 people to define it, you will get ten answers.

The Reflecting Stream

A stream is like a mirror,
Bubbling and sparkling under the sun.
It shows us what kind of mood we're in,
A path straight to the subconscious.
It shows us what we look like to others.

Are you happy?
Your smile is wide and warm as the sun.
The stream gurgles in appreciation.
Your smile looks great, doesn't it?
Now you know what other people think of you
When they see that smile radiating with happiness.

Are you sad?
Your face is contorted with a frown.
Tears from your swollen eyes drop into the stream.
Was it a lost love? Was it a death?
Those tears are carried away downstream
To inflict sorrow upon somebody else.

Are you angry?
You must really be mad at someone.
The stream reveals a face of twisted anguish.
That's sure not a pretty sight, you know.
People will cross the street to avoid your wrath.

My friend, the best is happiness.
It's that special gift from God for you
To give people in times of sadness.
So listen and look into the stream.
It's a prophet of beauty, serenity and happiness.



Artwork by
George Schneider



JS

The Journey Continues: Reflections at the End of the Semester.

And what a semester it has been! As I sat down to compose a Christmas letter that would go out to friends and family, I thought back to a few months ago when I had just arrived here in Gettysburg, and how different I am now than I was then, and I wrote with certainty:

"...not a day has gone by in which I haven't felt stretched to my limit; spiritually, emotionally, physically. I may not always say this, but it's great. I'm gaining a sense of direction I never knew...and it is the most incredible blessing to be in community with my Christian brothers and sister, joining in frequent worship and prayer...this is the safe place where I can do it all over again the best way for me. God has given me a most precious gift."

And indeed He has. I didn't know what to expect when I got here, none of us did. What I have started to learn is that whatever I expect is usually meager in comparison to what God has in store. What there is to learn is far richer and broader than I ever could dream. The experiences I dread most are the most wonderful--the ones I wouldn't give up for anything.

Not that it's perfect. But that's just part of it. That's part of the learning process that we all need to go through. It isn't easy, but who really wants it to be easy?

The God of relationships is born--Emanuel!! He is here as the Spirit that moves among us. He is the great Mediator in all of our lives. And He permeates every (EVERY) facet of us.

I don't know what tomorrow will offer. Thank God I don't know! I do know that today I make decisions with the knowledge in mind that God is with me. I rejoice in the knowledge, the absolute certainty, that I am chosen, called, justified, and that God knows it all outside of time. I rejoice in the doubts too, because they are part of the faith journey that we became part of in Baptism--testified to in the Scriptures.

Surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives!!

Steve Fricht

Dear friends at Gettysburg Seminary,

at school all my communist teachers taught me that Americans are militant, violent and first of all selfish.

When I came to Gettysburg in September I immediately realized that the opposite is true:

You are friendly and warm-hearted.

Nobody ever offended me because of the history of Germany as I expected it. Many of you helped me to feel less guilty for the past and present events in my country.

You were patient with my English and always tried to help. Even New Yorkers who are said to be the most inbred people were nice and friendly in answering the questions I asked them.

To live in a community like Gettysburg was a great opportunity for me. I experienced the pros and the cons of this life. I enjoyed the pros which were the majority. Never in my life I felt a caring for each other like on this campus. Your asking for my needs and problems and your sharing of my wonderful days will remain in my memories all my life long.

In this letter I want to say THANK YOU to all seminarians and staff.

Special thank to:

- CHRIS, for being with me when I saw the 'symbol of liberty' for all East Germans for the first time with my own eyes

- GEORGE, for showing me America and
scrutinizing my pacifism
- JEN, for teaching me all the slang
 - JEANNINE, for trusting me
 - JOHN, for giving me a Christmas-present in the
middle of November
 - KRISTINA, for listening to me when I felt very down
 - MR. KRODEL, for saying "I am the man if
you have any problems"
 - LEW, for wasting your time with me
 - LOIS, for showing me the cultural side of
this country
 - SCOTT, for making me the most wonderful
compliment in my life

May God bless you all and may our brother
Jesus Christ be present in your life and work.

Candice



95.

Commentary

Will enough ever be enough?

In this world of more, will there ever be a time when people will lift their voices in one accord and say "enough"?

I doubt it. Our culture thrives on the constant need to grow. But not grow necessarily in a healthy sense, as in "grow spiritually" or "grow emotionally". The growth that society seems to need is like the star of the old horror film, "The Blob". This growth is consuming growth. It sucks up natural resources for the sake of economic stability. It eats human relationships for the sake of material gain. It chews on the Gospel and spits it out like a bitter pill. It gathers individuals together, wraps them in labels and swallows them whole. Fatness and lethargy are the outcomes if not the stated goals.

As Christians, what should we think about "The Blob"? Is there something we can do to stop this monster? Should we try to stop it?

Jesus gave us the great commandment to love God with all our hearts and minds and our neighbors as ourselves. What we must do is decide if "The Blob" can continue to exist for us while we strive to meet this command through the gift of faith. Some may find a measure of peaceful coexistence (many have), others may find it impossible to have the two exist on the same planet. In any case, each of us must examine ourselves and the extent to which "the Blob" has eaten up our relationships and lift our voices in a prayer of reconciliation and good stewardship.

Stephen Fiechter, 10/92

Everyone around here is so worried about their grades. The last time I worried as bad as these people are worrying was right before I was accepted to college. I remember it well. One grade, how can things be so unfair that life depends on one grade. First you fail the test so you get a B+ instead of an A for the quarter. Because you didn't get an A you get to take, yes it's the final exam. Well you know you can't pass the final so you don't bother to study which then gives you a C for the year. They send your final transcripts to the college of your choice. They notice the C which now means you are unqualified for your tuition grant. Therefore, you can't afford college. So you get a job, but you're not ready for work. So you quit and become a bum. After living on the streets for a few months you return home. Your parents don't want you, which hurts deeply. So you pull out a gun and shoot them. The police track you down and you're on trial for murder. They sentence you to life and lock you away. Under the pressure and strain of jail life you hang yourself, never to be bothered again. Yes, this life could be yours for the low, low price of one grade. Absurd to worry about one grade, isn't it.

He got up, stretched, pulled on sweats, hopped into his car and drove, and after about a mile, parked the car. He got out and tied his sneakers on the cars bumper. Looking up at the clear blue sky, he proceeded down the footpath. While looking at the one cirrus cloud that had the audacity to invade the field of blue, he stepped over the log that lay across the footpath. Continuing to admire the perfect cloud, for even the clouds in this place were perfect so they say, he side-stepped the hole that had been eroding from the side of the path. When his first foot hit the sand and his routine had started for the day, his mind began to wander. Thinking over his daily schedule, he passed blankly by the colorful coral he had not noticed in over five years. After his run he would drive home, shower, and head off to work. While pondering his client meeting, he passed the flowing palm trees opposite the breaking waves of the crystal blue water. The thought of a T.V. dinner was interrupted as he reached the end of the snow white beach. He could go no further due to the rising condos that had cut off the coral reef so abruptly. As he made his way back to the car, he thought about how badly he needed a vacation. The most appropriate words that came to mind were 'ho hum'. The tourists and developers only sent the refrain of his favorite song crashing into his reality. I gotta get outta this place, if it's the last thing I ever do. As he sang the refrain not once did it occur to him that he need not travel far to find roses to smell.

PEACE

Ode to Spot
by Data

Feles catus is your taxonomic nomenclature
an endothermic quadruped, carnivorous by nature.
Your visual, olfactory and auditory senses
contribute to your hunting skills, and natural defenses.
I find myself intrigued by your subvocal oscillations,
a singular development of cat communications
that obviates your basic hedonistic predilection
for a rhythmic stroking of your fur to demonstrate affection.
A tail is quite essential for your acrobatic talents.
You would not be so agile if you lacked its counterbalance.
And when not being utilized to aid in locomotion,
it often serves to demonstrate the state of your emotion.
Oh Spot! the complex levels of behavior you display
connote a fairly well-developed cognitive array.
And though you are not sentient, Spot, and do not comprehend,
I nonetheless consider you a true and loyal friend.

My life is a jigsaw puzzle.

In front of me I have an idea of what the finished product will be
like based on what I want and a plan the divine has. It's the
picture on the box.

But there are others around the table trying to help build the
puzzle. They've never seen what I've seen and really have no idea
what the finished puzzle will look like--what I will see as I turn
back while passing into new life.

If I let them they'll start jamming pieces together that just don't
fit. They may even get pieces from other puzzles mixed in. If I
don't stop them, the puzzle will never be finished perfectly.

The best that I can do for them is allow them to help me.
"Hand me that piece over there, will you?"
"That piece of sky goes here!"

Any more than that and I'm ruined.
Any less and I'm overwhelmed. *3f*

Another Day

The young man woke up on a bed of straw.
He stretched his stiff joints back into place.
He had stopped for the night at this foul-smelling barn.
His ragged clothes smell from days of grime.
He sighed and gathered up his few belongings.
The rays of the sun were penetrating through the dusty window.
He went outside and breathed the morning air.
Why does he do this? I don't know.
He finished his education and went back home
Dissatisfied with the world around him.
Squabbling parents, nagging girlfriend,
He decided to leave the world behind him.
He lives the life of a bum,
Begging food, living like a slimy rat.
That's how he spends his days.
He stands in the early morning air,
Reflecting on his past behavior.
Then he shifted to the present.
He must find food, for he is starving,
Because today is another day. *JS*

A tin can sits by the side of a
huddled mass of shredded cloth
as it shivers in the cold night air.
Positioned under the street light the
man lifts his head and with his
dark, sunken eyes he asks humanity for help.
The words "drunk" and "crazy lunatic" pierce
his ears with a sound as deafening
as the thunder in the sky, but just
as thunder passes with the storm
so does his despair, to be replaced by
hope in his fellow humanity.
But does he have the right to hope?
Does he have the right to put that
pressure on humanity, for it is humanity's
choice to rise to the occasion or let
just another statistic fall through the cracks.
In a moment of anticipation the answer is abundantly clear,
as he listens to the conversation of a couple
passing by. Who they are is not important. But
what they say, coupled with their actions,
seals his fate. "Unto the least of my brothers"
is all he hears as the couple carefully steps over
a tin can that sits next to a huddled mass
of shredded cloth as it shivers in the
cold night air.

PEACE

MERRY

PEACE ON EARTH

CHRISTMAS!

Christmas Is

The time of love,
the time of caring,
the time of giving,
the time of sharing.

It is the Christ Child
upon the manger of hay,
and the angels singing
on this glorious day.

It is Santa Claus
with loads of toys
to give all the good
little girls and boys.



It is a Christmas tree
with lights so bright,
and a choir singing
"Oh Holy Night."



It is sleigh rides
and bells that ring.
It's shepherds in the fields
and the Three Wise Kings.

It is Christmas caroling,
then sitting by a fire.
It is exchanging gifts
with one another.

It's reindeer and snow
and ribbons and bows.
It's the time we are free
for two weeks from LTSG!

In all, Christmas is:

The time for solitude and prayer,
reaching for people who know love so rare,
to give glory to God for family and friends so dear.
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

JS

GOOD WILL TO ALL!!!

HAPPY

NEW YEAR!