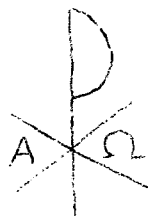


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Seminarian

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Issue 5

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Welcome one and all to Lancaster Theological Seminary. You have come at one of the crisis times in our institutional year. This is the time of year when students find themselves under a variety of pressures from classes, jobs, relationships, time management, and community life. This is the time when students are seeking a relief from the pressures by venting some anger at seemingly unrelated issues. Constant grumblings begin to grow into a vague sense of dissatisfaction with the situations and circumstances each individual is confronted with here on campus. Articulation of the sense of dissatisfaction is generally directed at the authority system to which each of us has willingly subjected ourselves to, the administration of the Seminary. Students begin to see adversaries, and begin to choose sides over even the most insignificant topics. As time passes, however, Christmas brings its spirit of good cheer and the rumblings of malcontent once again fade into the recesses of the mind until the mid-point of next semester.

As a rule, Seminarians are loosely divided into three categories, Juniors, Middlers, and Seniors. The Junior class has entered this fall filled with the Spirit of their individual calling and have spent the majority of their struggle here at Seminary trying to reconcile their particular calling with the corporate vision of "ministry" which is promoted by their peers and the Seminary community. Do I fit in here? With whom do I relate well? Will I be a good minister? These questions are uppermost in their minds. Some have processed these questions and moved on to the problems of day to day living and the question: How am I going to survive two and a half more years? Middlers are at the mid-point of their Seminary lives, having had at least a year to assess their calling, and to take affirmative action in directing their education towards a growing sense of ministry. Seniors see the end of the road in the not-too-distant future, and are panicking in the face of their chosen career looming all too quickly before them. The seniors are veterans of at least two years here, and lean towards tolerance for the sake of the greater goal of graduation.

Why then the chronic grumbling? You and I both knew I would have to surface this issue sooner or later. I have been a veteran of the parking lot wars for two and a half years. Parking policy is written in the Handbook, yet it is only enforced two times a year - for the convenience of the Board of Trustees. I am not at odds with the parking policy as it is, my main concern is in the enforcement of the policy. As long as it remains voluntary there can be no motion toward resolving the discomfort. Others have other concerns. Security, rising costs and shrinking budgets, the list is a long one. Every person on this campus knows that he or she has not cornered the market in frustration. Every institution has chronic problems. It simply does not help to have them simply acknowledged and rationalized. I have rationalized for you in the first paragraph, but the frustration still hurts.

Donald L. Mason

AN INTERVIEW WITH LORD SHOVEL

Barry Wimp: Good evening. Barry Wimp speaking from Washington with another interview. My guest tonight is Lord Shovel of Hudd, the new British ambassador to the U.S., who has only recently arrived to take up his duties. Good evening Lord Shovel.

Lord Shovel: Good evening.

Barry W.: I understand, Lord Shovel, that you were a trade union leader in Britain.

Lord S.: Yes, that's correct. I was General Secretary of the B.G.U.

Barry W.: What's the B.G.U.?

Lord S.: The British Gravediggers Union.

Barry W.: I see. And were you always involved with the trade union movement?

Lord S.: Yes, from the time I was five.

Barry W.: You were only five when you joined a union?

Lord S.: No. But when I was five I staged my first protest action.

Barry W.: And what was that?

Lord S.: I threatened to hold my breath until I turned blue and died.

Barry W.: For what reason?

Lord S.: He mum insisted on me going to school.

Barry W.: What did your mother say when you threatened to hold your breath?

Lord S.: "Suits me. Means one less mouth to feed."

Barry W.: So you didn't hold your breath after all?

Lord S.: Of course not. I'm here, ain't I?

Barry W.: Yes. Well, now, you founded the B.G.U. didn't you? When you were 20?

Lord S.: Yes. I left school at the age of sixteen and struck out on my own. Left home, too.

Barry W.: You wanted to get away from everything, make a clean break, was that it?

Lord S.: Well, yes. And there'd been a spot of trouble at home, too.

Barry W.: Oh, what sort of trouble?

Lord S.: I had tried to organize a strike by all of us children to demand five meals a day.

Barry W.: And you didn't succeed?

Lord S.: No, Mum refused to engage in collective bargaining. In fact, she resorted to the worst sort of strike-breaking techniques. Offered candy to little Willie, who was only 6. Told the girls they could each have a new dress. That sort of thing.

Barry W.: What did she offer you?

Lord S.: Ten minutes to clear off - permanently.

Barry W.: Well, Charlie - may I call you Charlie? Is that what everyone calls you?

Lord S.: Everyone - including you - calls me "Lord Shovel."

Barry W.: So you were 16, and had left home. What happened then?

Lord S.: It was the blackest period of my life, I'll tell you. I had to submit to the yoke of capitalist oppression. I had to bear the burden of a monstrous, inequitable economic system. I had to bow the head and bend the knee. I...

Barry W.: You had to get a job.

Lord S.: Quite. But it wasn't easy, you understand. Britain was in the midst of a terrible depression brought on, as always, by the greedy ruling classes in a deliberate attempt to keep the laboring classes in their places. Times were hard -

(continued page 3)

very hard. It wasn't like now, when a man has a right not to work and still get paid. It was the Dark Ages in Britain...

Barry W.: But did you get a job?

Lord S.: I'm coming to that. I'm just trying to give you the background. Yes, I did get a job - ~~as~~ gravedigger.

Barry W.: And you've been digging graves ever since.

Lord S.: Certainly not! Her Majesty's Ambassador does not dig anything. The General Secretary of the B.G.U. does not dig anything! I dug graves for only four years, until I was 20.

Barry W.: And then?

Lord S.: Well, then's when I had my big idea, see? My vision, I always called it. My vision was of a gravedigger's union, with full employment for its members at decent wages, and with decent working conditions.

Barry W.: You didn't have all that when you started as a digger?

Lord S.: You mean as a gravedigger? I am a gravedigger! Gravediggers dig graves only. If you want some other sort of hole, you get the appropriate union to dig it.

Barry W.: That if you want the grave filled in?

Lord S.: I seem to detect a note of flippancy in your manner. I thought you said you'd read my autobiography, Dig It?

Barry W.: I did. All five volumes.

Lord S.: Well, then. You should know perfectly well that in Britain, only a member of the Grave Fillers Union may fill in graves. That's on page 984 of Volume 4, in case you'd care to refresh your memory.

Barry W.: Could we get back to your vision, please?

Lord S.: Of course. I talked to some of the other gravediggers in the area, and found them just as dissatisfied as I was. You have to remember that we had to work in all kinds of weather, with primitive tools such as shovels. And the work, while steady, was irregular. I mean, sometimes we'd go a fortnight without anyone dying, then, suddenly, just when you'd planned a little outing for yourself, three or four bodies would turn up. People had no consideration - they'd just die whenever they felt like it. That did it matter to them if it was a freezing day in January, or a blazing hot one in July? What did they care that you had to dig all afternoon when you'd planned to go to the cinema? They had died, and it was your job to bury them, and you'd better do it.

Barry W.: So you and your friends decided to do something about it?

Lord S.: That's right. We got together and formed the B.G.U. Naturally, I was made the General Secretary, seeing as how it was my idea. We drew up a list of demands and distributed them in the villages where we worked.

Barry W.: Didn't you meet any resistance?

Lord S.: Oh, we did meet some, but not as much as you'd think. We would go round to the different villages and hold meeting to explain our demands. I did the talking, and I must have been fairly persuasive, because at almost every meeting someone - usually an upper class reactionary, the last person you'd expect - would jump up and call out: "Over my dead body." Well, in those days, people in the villages took their lead from the members of the upper classes, so, naturally, when they saw the lads and me carrying him off to the local graveyard, why, they all thought: "This might be a good idea after all."

RACISM/SEXISM GROUP

What are the connections between racism and sexism? The two racism and sexism groups met this past week to consider some of the realities which are shared by people who are discriminated against on the basis of race and those discriminated against on the basis of sex and/or sexual orientation. There is a common experience of dehumanization, a type of caste system which occurs with non-white persons, women, gays and lesbians subject to the ruling class of straight, white men. And within this caste system, there is also a hierarchy which creates differences even among these oppressed groups particularly evidenced through economic and legal expression.

We as Christians may want to view these social and political realities in still another light. What is the connection between racism and sexism? Darkness. The darkness of isolation. The darkness of not being heard. The darkness in which one cannot see her/his own dignity and worth. The darkness which hides the possibility of full potential. The darkness in which one knows only suffering and brokenness. The darkness of a death on the cross.

Who dwells in this darkness? Those of us who are victims at the sacrificial altar praising a god who is straight, white, male. And who are the victims? All the children who learn to live in darkness. The non-white person who must make it in a white world to find his/her own worth. The woman who must somehow become more like a man to be heard. The lesbian, the gay who must 'straighten' up. And the straight, white man who must play the role of a false god.

A light does come in the darkness. Giving us hope. Giving us love. Giving us victory over death. Giving us community. May we move together in the radiance of this light away from the dark sacrifices to a false god and toward the brightness of wholeness and unity. In Jesus' name.

Patti Carque

MEETING: PLEASE NOTE

The Racism/Sexism Groups meet at 8 pm Wednesday and 11:30 am Friday in room L216. We are using the UCC Resource Packet on Racism and Sexism as a springboard for discussions although many come and participate from personal experience as well. Please join us on either Wednesday or Friday if you're interested. We'd welcome your participation and support.

P. Carque

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF REV. SIDNEY SPELLING: SUPERPASTOR

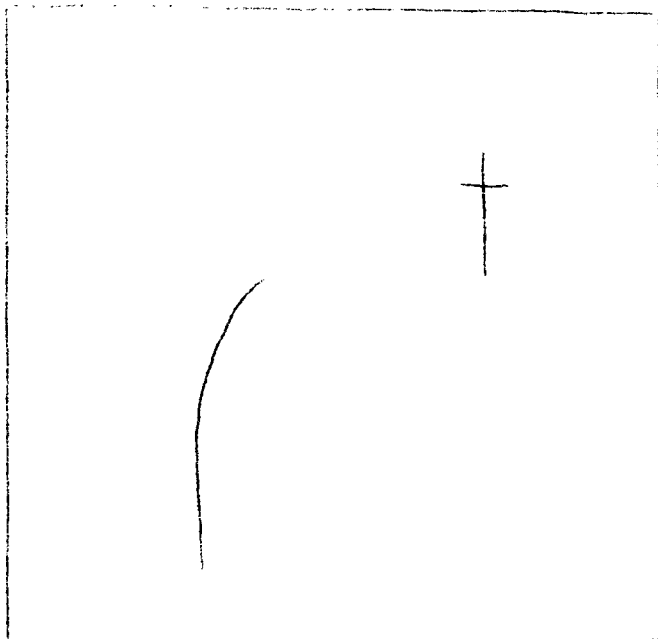
To prepare for tonight's meeting, I began to page through my card-catalogue to ferret out, say, twenty of my thirty thousand tomes. I turned immediately to the Psychology section. As I settled down to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and Psychoanalytic Theory by Oren Y. Hoostererstafooster, for some light background reading, A bright shaft of light pierced my consciousness. "Spelling!" boomed the voice. It sounded like my consistory president. I looked around and saw nothing but a gap in my venetian blinds through which the sunlight was pouring. I rose to draw the shades tighter, and was immediately thrown back down into my Chippendale rocker. "Spelling!" the voice resumed, "You sit still when I am talking to you." This time I surely recognized the voice. "Mom!" I said, "How are you? What brings you back in these parts?" "A mother's pain. A mother's disgrace. A mother's son ruining his career by bending to the whims of his consistory. Son, I want to be proud of you, I want to be able to hold my head up high when I talk about you. Don't give in to the consistory. Don't defend yourself with books, defend yourself with honor and integrity, Defend..." "Thanks for the advice Mom, but I really have to get through this book." I interrupted.

What's this? Sidney Spelling talking back to his mother's ghost? He's in next week, same time, same station.

DISCIPLESHIP FROM A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Why me, Noah?
 There was another choice
 another dove.
 Why didn't I just step back?
 I struggled and searched
 and found no rest.
 I screamed and cried
 but found no peace.
 I staggered and fell
 from the weight
 of the rain
 each drop pounding down
 like a ton of dynamite.
 I swirled and lost my way
 in the wind
 of false prophesy
 from the mouths of idol-makers
 hurling vomit
 so thick
 as to blind my path
 and stop the flapping of my wings.
 I longed for my ark
 my home
 my loves.
 And the final bomb
 raining on my tired limbs.
 the last spew of vomit
 drenching my journey
 I found my ark
 in sitting down
 against it all
 in joy.

Patti Carque

CAN YOU DRAW THISLOST LOVE FOUND

It was somewhere between
 yesterday and today
 that I remembered.
 A foggy feeling
 a whispery voice;
 the past was reborn.
 I felt it in
 the bottom of my chest-
 where my heart had sunk.
 It's roots deep
 in my soul;
 feeding on my breath.
 I held it hostage-
 or perhaps,
 it held me.
 Timeless it was;
 born in a time forgotten,
 yet still with me.
 It was you;
 the part of you
 that once was a part of me.
 And it would be
 with me from today-
 till another tomorrow.

R. Michael Vaughan

GOD BLESS YOU CHRISTMAS

God bless you Christmas
 wherever you are
 and keep your courage bright.
 For the spirit of man
 is the candle of God
 and it burns on the darkest night.

God bless you Christmas
 wherever you are
 and keep you strong in faith.
 For the spirit of God
 is the refuge of man
 and the light in his dwelling
 place.

LOU ANN EARNST

STAFF, ETC.

The Seminarian is a weekly paper
 filled with community and world
 concerns. We wish to represent
 one avenue of creativity and
 information available to the
 whole community. Deadline for
 articles to be submitted is
 Monday - any time. This week's
 staff: Barb Kershner typed some
 (the part without mistakes) and
 I typed the rest.

Donald L. Mason