

"strain at a gnat" when it should be "strain out...." It doesn't really make any great difference. But then there are things in-between.

There are matters which may make no difference to you, or little difference to you, but which make a tremendous difference to other people with whom you want to work. That is a tough problem, and it is a problem that I believe every seminary student needs to give some thought to before he graduates. I have known individuals who have not given thought to it until after they graduate, and have lost one, two or three years of useful service to the Lord because they had not thought through secondary matters which to other people seemed to be extremely vital.

Personally I've been very much disturbed in past years--in some past years--when we have had Systematics IV the last thing before graduation. Because practically everything you get in Systematics I, Systematics II, and Systematics III--I don't say everything, but most that you get there is simply a coming to see the clear teachings of Scripture on matters on which most Christians are pretty well agreed. But in Systematics IV you deal with Eschatology and you deal with the Sacraments. And Christians often break off fellowship over differences in these two areas.

If you feel that a certain stand in either of these is important it is going to make it easy for you to work with certain groups and may make it impossible for you to work with others. But if you feel that certain things in these areas are not particularly important it is good for you to know just what you do think, and how far you can go in working with others. So that minor differences will not be a bar to your finding opportunities for service, of effective service later on.

I wish Systematics IV was given in the second year. I think that would be much better than the third year. To have people start thinking about these things, and not because they are more important than what you are getting in Systematics III and II. They're not! Those matters you are getting in Systematics I, II, and III are tremendously important but they are not matters which will usually interfere with your cooperation with other Christians. But these matters of the Sacraments and of Eschatology, there may be areas which you don't think are particularly important but you may find it very difficult to work with others-- in fact they may rule you out from their fellowship.

If you cannot make a statement on them which is at least somewhat satisfactory to them. Therefore I urge you-- and speaking from past experience of seeing a frustrated frustration of individuals when they graduate-- to bring it to your attention to give special thought to this early in your course rather than in the very last month and to think through some of these matters and to have a more definite idea what you are going to say as you seek to work with others, because most of us have to work with others in serving the Lord. There are very few who carry on an individual unrelated activity for the Lord's service.