

## RAKING UP THE PAST

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Memories of the past thirty-four years are very tricky. Unfortunately we tend to forget what we want to remember and often remember what we want to forget. In the history of the ETS there is very little that I remember that I want to forget and yet there is much forgotten that I would want to remember. The net result is not much to add to Burton Goddard's excellent history, *The Evangelical Theological Society Is Born*. I might add that this is an interesting experience in oral tradition. A student of mine once remarked that oral tradition is a wonderful tool. It explains why ancient elements have been so tenaciously remembered for the "P document" while at the same time explaining how the "facts" have been so "lamentably twisted" in the short interval before the gospels were written down. The present reminiscences are neither rabbinic nor mechanical. They are unified in authorship but of no parenetic, heuristic or hermeneutic significance.

I remember the thrill that Allan MacRae, the late J. Oliver Buswell and I experienced when we received the invitation to join in the formation of such a society. The seminary we served had no budget for expenses at scholarly meetings—indeed in those days our evangelical seminaries in general ran on shoestring budgets. But we made an extra effort to attend. The meeting was highly successful. Not only was the Society off to a good start, but we met other like-minded men whose cooperation became essential when the translation of the *NIV* and similar interdenominational and scholarly efforts were begun.

For the first five years of the Society I was the secretary. The office was my home and the mailing list was kept tolerably up to date with the help of a portable hand-operated addressing machine that used stencils cut by typewriter. A mailing was a family job. One time my eldest daughter, then about six, was anxious to help. I got her to put stamps on some envelopes. But I soon found that she was carefully putting the stamps on the lower left corner of the envelopes. Stamps then were only three cents (I think) but still it called for a careful removal job to maintain the ETS image of careful, meticulous, capable operation.

Another incident could have been disastrous except for the kind providence of God. A carload of the Gordon faculty were on the Pennsylvania turnpike driving to a western meeting when suddenly a deer jumped out in front of the car. The driver swerved to the left, crossed the median and also the other roadway (no cars were approaching) and landed upside down on the left side of the road. It skidded a good distance before coming to a stop. Six astonished ETSers climbed out unharmed but having had an existential experience.

Another time—I forget the circumstances—Merrill Tenney was presiding at a banquet in which I believe both ETS and American Scientific Affiliation members were present. Tenney introduced me as one of the early ETS members and

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then introduced an ASA member "to the right of Dr. Harris." The ASA member at once responded that he never expected to be introduced as to the right of Laird Harris.

The meetings of the Society are of course much larger now than in the formative years. I understand that Northeastern Bible College, when they offered to host the 1982 meeting, expected to serve about 150 members. They missed it by several parasangs. A horde of 340 descended on the school, but they bravely and capably took care of us all. They fed us sumptuously and we had a wonderful time.

At present the plenary sessions are interlarded with sectional meetings on special topics. Everyone no longer knows everyone else as in the "good old days." But in the good new days the size and influence of the Society is, thankfully, much larger and its opportunities greater as we consider one another to "provoke" one another to more efforts in our discipline and as we "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (*NIV*).