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My Dear Brother:

If my records are correct, it has been a year since I have invaded your privacy with these random comments. As I look back and try to discover why I should have neglected one of my most pleasant duties, I find that the answer lies in "meetings." It seems to be a curious mark of the Church of the twentieth century that we must confer with each other at the least possible provocation. The air is full of meetings, conferences, conventions, seminars, workshops — and so forth. We run from one to the other trying to make at least a minor contribution to the subjects under discussion. About thirty years ago when this trend first began in our own communion I remember that my Grandfather Hueschen, accustomed to the quietness and solitude of Perry County, said to me: "Ihr versammelt euch noch in den Himmel hinein." I have seen no evidence of this yet, but I have an idea that he was fundamentally right.

By the way, I am assisting a student in writing a term paper on some of the problems of the modern ministry. Would you, therefore, help along by reaching for a postcard and just writing down the number of meetings which you must attend or conduct in a given year? I would like to have at least a few statistics because I am sure they will indicate the dismaying prevalence of a problem which needs thoughtful discussion.

Much of our time during the past two months has been given to an examination of our efforts for the new building for our Law School. We now have completed the first part of the campaign with approximately $250,000, which is less than half of our goal. A few weeks ago we attended a meeting of the College of District Presidents and upon their counsel and permission we are engaging in the second phase of the campaign during the spring months of 1962.

I do not have to repeat any of the statements which have been presented to you and your congregation by the literature on the campaign. We know that this building is absolutely necessary for the continuation of the only Lutheran law school in the country. Recently we have again been in touch with the American Bar Association, and they have strongly urged that the actual construction of the building begin just as quickly as possible. This, of course, makes your help most necessary at the present time. If you have not yet had your congregation participate in our Law School effort, may I respectfully and urgently ask you to give us a lift during the coming months? The erection of the new building for our School of Law will, I believe, be a significant factor in the growing influence of our church in American life.

LOOKING AROUND SECTION: For some time I have wondered if there is among us a curious, terrifying readiness to believe and speak the worst about an institution or a brother. Recently I have seen several examples of this and have wondered just what the cause may be. A brother stops at the office and reports: "Did you know that Theophilus buried two Free-Masons in the last month?" I had to admit that I had not heard the good news. I did, however, ask where the information had come from, and the good brother replied that he had seen it in the local press. Now I do not know the circumstances surrounding these cases. I do know Theophilus well enough to realize that if he buried some Free-Masons he must have had some very good Scriptural reasons for it. My great dismay, of course, lies in the fact that this was not assumed by everyone who heard about this particular event. This sort of thing has been going on all over the Church so long that it has cast a pall of bitterness and pain over many of our brethren in the ministry.

The Lutheran publications bring the statistics for 1960. While statistics are always dangerous, they can also be very illuminating. One of the most interesting facts I found in studying the Lutheran statistics is that the United Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod have almost exactly the same number of baptized members. On the other hand, the United Lutheran Church has only 4,640 organized congregations while we have 5,532. This means that we have almost a thousand more congregations than the United Lutheran Church with the same baptized membership. Here is a clear case of the importance of interpreting statistics properly. The optimist will say we have a thousand more congregations because we are doing some very aggressive mission work. The pessimist will say that we have entirely too many small congregations who are not able to carry their full share of the work of the Church. Whatever the answer may be, I do feel that these figures are tremendously significant and that they should be considered by our brethren in authority throughout the land. If you have an explanation, I shall be glad to publish it.

I am very happy to note that the C. F. W. Walther sesquicentennial produced a number of essays which are a worthy tribute to his unique contribution to the development of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Particularly the October issue of the Concordia Theological Monthly carries a number of articles which are an excellent interpretation of Walther's life and work. One of the most interesting sidelights on his life is reflected in the Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly in which Henry W. Reimann refers to one of the strange and mysterious incidents in the history of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod — the professorship of Dr. Eduard Preuss at Concordia Seminary, St.
Louis, and his resignation and eventual entrance into the Roman Catholic priesthood. Many years ago the sainted Dr. J. A. Friedrich first called my attention to this curious episode by giving me the translation of Preuss' magnificent work on "Justification." Translated by an unknown hand, this work is undoubtedly one of the most thorough contributions to the understanding of the justification by faith which has appeared within the Lutheran Church for several hundred years. At first apparently Dr. Walther was very much impressed by Preuss but later some weaknesses appeared which strained their relationship. Preuss resigned from the Seminary after two years on December 1, 1871, and on the 25th of January, 1872, he was baptized into the Roman Catholic faith at St. Mary of the Victory Church. Mr. Reimann points to the fact that except for a few brief references here and there Eduard Preuss dropped from Missouri Synod literature to become only a legend. I hope that our scholars at Concordia Institute will see if there are any additional facts which might be illuminating. We do know that the episode distressed Walther deeply and left a permanent mark upon him. Undoubtedly there must have been some very strange psychological and theological reasons for a man so thoroughly devoted to the doctrine of justification by faith to move over into Rome a few years later.

Our own contribution here at the University to the Walther Sesquicentennial will be a new translation and commentary on Walther's famous theses on "The Distinction between Law and Gospel." It is another interesting footnote to history that the translation of these theses and Walther's comments was one of the first things that the sainted Dr. W. H. T. Dau did when he became the first Lutheran president of Valparaiso University. After a year of corporate work, especially by younger members of our faculty, we are ready to republish the theses together with a commentary which will make them increasingly relevant for our own day and age.

For a long time some of us have felt that these theses can make a very significant contribution to the life and thought of the Church of the twentieth century. This is really "must" reading. This is really Lutheran. A thorough understanding of the distinction between Law and Gospel will prevent us from falling into the swamps of modernism, on the one hand, or the bleak tundra of fundamentalism, on the other. For anyone who asks the question: "What is really Lutheran," this is an important part of the answer. We hope to have these theses in your hands sometime in March.

A few months ago the morning papers brought the news of the death of Eero Saarinen, the noted architect of many of the world's great buildings and designer of our Senior College at Fort Wayne. I dropped the papers for a moment and thought back to the days in the mid-forties when we were interviewing prospective architects for the Senior College. When Saarinen came into our meeting for the first time, we knew almost immediately that we were face to face with something new and different. I shall never forget the rainy winter night when he invited us to dinner at a Chicago hotel. We expected many questions concerning architectural style, capacity of buildings, type of classrooms and so forth. To our astonishment there was nothing like that. For almost three hours, in his shy, Finnish way he asked us questions: "What is the distinctive mark of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod? What is its basic philosophy of education? Is it interested in scholarship? What is its mystique? What is its future in the life of Christendom? How is it different from other church bodies?" And so on and on — while we scratched our heads and searched our hearts and minds for reasonably intelligent answers. There may be some who are not pleased with the final results of this meeting and many others, but no one can deny that he created something new and distinctive. I like to think that some of our answers to that rainy night led to the towering centrality of the chapel, the curious intimacy of many of the classrooms, the seemingly harsh whiteness softened everywhere by nature's green — even the ducks on the lake as reminders of the fact that quackery can also appear in church colleges. At any rate we shall long remember him. In him were the signs of greatness.

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At a recent meeting of a Synodical Board a younger brother suddenly reminds me of a brief note on preaching I had written several years ago for a volume of sermons by a good friend. He felt that this might be reprinted. For whatever it may be worth, here is at least a part of a very little and unimportant essay on "preaching."

It is good for us to remember now and then that the clocks of the universe are still running because Christian preachers are in pulpits all over our planet. This is the Christian view of all history. When the last preacher has preached his last sermon and the last sinner has heard him gladly — that will be the signal for the final trumpets.

The preaching and teaching of the church are therefore cosmic and eternal in their significance. They determine, under the sign of the Spirit of God, not only the salvation of men but the destiny of man. By entrusting His revelation to the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments, God has laid upon the holy ministry a great and holy burden. That which has been entrusted to them is not man's reason or brilliant speech or clever speculation, but the living Christ, cradled in the written and spoken Word. He must be lifted from the dust of time and the dark of men's sins by the hands of the Christian preacher Sunday after Sunday. Every good sermon brings His return in glory so much nearer.

Every faithful preacher knows this. In our corrosive time, however, he finds himself face to face with vast, subtle, impersonal forces which tend to distract his attention from his supreme and central task. Secularized congregations, run on "business principles," demand work of him which is tragically far from St. Paul's classic ordination exhortation to Timothy: "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them." Somewhere, sometime we have forgotten that. The telephones ring, the meetings multiply, the suppers require attendance, the financial drives must be organized — and the preacher's study is empty. The good books gather dust, and the hours of meditation are rare. Sunday morning comes, the hungry sheep look up and are not fed, and the preacher is suddenly lonely and afraid because a still, small voice tells him that he has failed his Lord. One can learn about men by living with God; but one cannot learn about God by living with men. There must be time in the preacher's life for the recapture of that ancient and living power which marked all great preachers. The church must give him time and room for the daily awareness of God in Christ, to sense His presence and His grace, to tell Him of his joys and sorrows, to walk with Him as a friend. Having been with God, he can then bring others to the place
where they, too, may see God — Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary, Ascension Hill, Pentecost — wherever God is in the love and pity of Jesus Christ.

This is the only road to good and great preaching. As he travels it, the preacher finds himself in the mysterious aura of change and changelessness, of timeliness and timelessness, which surrounds the Christian pulpit at its best. For example, the message in this volume is the same as it was twenty centuries ago in Corinth; the individual messages are different in tone and style and emphasis. Fort Wayne, A.D. 1954 is not Corinth A.D. 70. Sin is the same, and grace is the same; but the guises which sin assumes and the environment in which grace operates are quite different. There is a great difference between a world that is pagan and a world in which many have looked at Christ and deliberately turned away from Him.

Sermons beyond numbering have been preached since our Lord sat in a boat on Lake Galilee and Peter surprised himself and others on Pentecost. Volumes of sermons by forgotten divines clutter the book stores on Clark Street and Fourth Avenue. It would seem that the appearance of one more collection is not very significant for the ongoing life of the Kingdom. And yet it has very real meaning and value. Sermons are a distinctive mark of the Church Militant; there will be no sermons in the Church Triumphant. Spoken by one man, heard by hundreds, read by thousands, they represent the deep, eternal undertones of man’s knowledge of God and God’s quest of man in the hard way of the Cross. The storms of divine anger and divine peace are in them, and it is good for the world at the twentieth century to hear them and feel them. And this is all that is expected of all preachers who have gone up to Calvary and have come down again to tell the waiting hearts of men about God, forever audible and visible in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE: One of the most memorable experiences during our recent trip to Europe was watching the German television presenting some of the Westerns which infest our networks here. It was just a little hard to take when a sheriff rode into an Indian reservation and was greeted by the Choctaw chief with “Wie geht’s!”

* * *

DIM VIEW SECTION: I am now on the mailing list for the “Crusade Bulletin” devoted to the promotion of Billy Graham’s Chicago Crusade which will begin on May 30, 1962. More than eight months before the opening date the smooth organization of Billy Graham’s “team” has already moved into action. Somehow I have never quite been able to warm up to this type of thing. In the first place, there is the tremendous amount of almost artificial organization outing even Madison Avenue at its worst. In addition, I believe that the Gospel as preached by Billy Graham is over-simplified and definitely Reformed in background. Apparently he knows very little about the means of grace in the Scriptural sense of the word. Somewhat uneasily I feel that behind all these special efforts also in our own church there is the implication that the week-by-week faithful preaching of the Gospel to our congregations has somehow failed and that we must now do something to inject some adrenaline into the life of the Church. All of this leaves me cold.

If you have been blessed with a long memory you may recall that now and then I have mounted my white horse and ridden off against the use of gobbledy-gook in some academic disciplines, particularly education and sociology. Now comes Dr. Herman Spivey, vice-president of the University of Tennessee, writing in “Overview” about the same sort of thing. His article is entitled: “Gobbledygook: The Art of Non-Think.” He moves in particularly on the sociologist and points out that since this is a comparatively new discipline its practitioners have not yet been able to translate their jargon into acceptable English. One example of some of the horrors of this will suffice:

“An element of a shared symbolic system which serves as a criterion or standard for selection among the alternatives of orientation which are intrinsically open in a situation may be called a value . . . But from this motivational orientation aspect of the totality of action it is, in view of the role of symbolic systems, necessary to distinguish a ‘value-orientation’ aspect. This aspect concerns, not the meaning of the expected state of affairs to the actor in terms of his gratification-deprivation balance but the content of the selective standards themselves. The concept of value-orientation in this sense is thus the logical device for formulating one central aspect of the articulation of cultural traditions into the action system.

. . . It is the inherent in an action system that action is, to use one phrase, ‘normatively oriented.’ This follows, as was shown, from the concept of expectations and its place in action theory, especially in the ‘active’ phase in which the actor pursues goals. Expectations then, in combination with the ‘double contingency’ of the process of interaction as it has been called, create a crucially imperative problem of order . . .

The problem of order, and thus of the nature of the integration of stable systems of social interaction, that is, of social structure, thus focuses on the integration of the motivation of actors with the normative cultural standards which integrate the action system, in our context interpersonally. These standards are, in the terms used in the preceding chapter, patterns of value-orientation, and as such are a particularly crucial tradition of the cultural tradition of the social system.” (Talcott Parsons, The Social System)

TRANSLATION

People often share standards and expect one another to stick to them. In so far as they do, their society may be orderly. (Example quoted and translated by C. Wright Mills in The Sociological Imagination)"

Dr. Spivey adds to his article a remarkable lexicon for the non-thinker.

“Lexicon for the Non-Thinker

Handy phrase guide for reference when one has nothing to say and is given twenty minutes to say it:

Reappraisal through an interdisciplinary framework
Personality correlates of decision-making
Orientating the staff to maximized objectives
Implementation of the developmental approach
Minimizing budgetary interpolations
Non-hierarchical factors in the environment
Systematic, on-going evaluation
Effecting a reduction in attrition
Oscillation of the mobility-stability ratio"

Perhaps his best example is a reference to a title of an article in a learned journal: "Verbal and Overt Reactions of Men and Women to Unexpected Mild Nociceptive Stimulation." What the author of this article actually did was "to stand on a street corner, jab every fiftieth passing pedestrian with a pin, measure how far he jumped, and record whether he said 'Ouch' or 'Damn.'"

I have no idea when these notes will reach your desk. They will probably be mixed in with the avalanche of Christmas cards — too late to say anything about Christmas this year. I would, however, like to join you in a meditation on the meaning of time as it is made relevant by the coming of a new year. Undoubtedly there were ages in this history of the Western World which were closer to the profound realities of life and living. One of these marks of closeness was undoubtedly their greater awareness of the constant relation between time and eternity — seeing life as a contract between the living, the dead and the unborn. We are never alone in time. Behind us are the men and women who have given us the heritage of the present and before us, still hidden beyond the veil of time are the men and women who will come after us and whose lives and happiness will depend so largely and desperately upon our willingness to carry our responsibility to them.

Previous ages had more of that than we have because they were closer to the slow, majestic rhythm of life, nearer to nature than our urban civilization. Above all, however, they had a greater consciousness of eternity. Their sense of the fact that life is a pattern which includes heaven, a melody that lingers beyond the gates of death was clear and personal.

One of the great black curses of our modern life is that we live too momentarily. We live so fast that we have lost the sense of the unity of time and eternity. One can lay this principle down almost anywhere. Look at the basic problem of sin, and the carelessness and thoughtlessness with which we approach it! One of the basic reasons is the shrugging statement: "What will it matter tomorrow? We may have a good time tonight. Tomorrow is another day." The Christian pulpit must, therefore, point out that you cannot separate today and tomorrow, and that the graves of the world are full of men and women who failed in trying this.

It is, therefore, necessary that we recover a profound and delicate sense of eternity. This must be accompanied by an equally sharp sense of the transitory nature of life and of the world. Even on the physical level it is good for us to remember as another year dawns how delicately poised, as on the edge of a knife, life on our planet really is. A very slight disturbance in the equilibrium of the heavenly bodies would end the whole business in a moment. We live in a narrow margin of heat and cold, and the extension of the margin in either direction would be the end of living things. This, of course, means that it is held in the hand of the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. Having come to faith in our Savior we cannot believe that this fleeting, transitory thing between nothing and nowhere is really the end and measure of all of life.

If we believe in two worlds, this world and the world to come, the contract between the living and the dead, we shall be able to live without lasting fear. As Christians we shall live, now partly, sometime fully, in that world unseen but not unknown, in that stillness at the center of our wheeling worlds where God lives, the same yesterday, today and forever, where alone we find our ultimate peace and our lasting rest. When all is said and done, when our hours and days and our years move into the light of eternity, we shall know that we were made for Him and our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.

This is especially true of us who are the momentary ambassadors of the Eternal. It is necessary for us to remember that next to the constant consciousness of the Incarnation and the Atonement the most important factor in our ministry is this strange, God-given sense of eternity. This has been the mark of all great preachers in the history of Christendom. They have been the voices from another world. They have been literally angels of the heavens. With this realization comes a sense of urgency, a restless sacrificial passion for the salvation of souls whose way is short and whose destiny is eternal.

May the hand of God rest gently upon your ministry in 1962. Sincerely yours,

O.P. Kretzmann

P.S. FROM THE MAILING ROOM CLERKS:

What a relief to mail out a piece which doesn't mention the congregational offering for Valparaiso university! All we've done for the last six weeks is mail out bulletin inserts to all the congregations; everybody MUST know by now how important the congregational offering for Valparaiso is to the current operations budget of the school.