December 1953

O.P. Kretzmann
Valparaiso University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.valpo.edu/campus_commentary

Recommended Citation
Kretzmann, O.P., "December 1953" (1953). Campus Commentary. 45.
https://scholar.valpo.edu/campus_commentary/45
My dear Brother:

This will probably reach you together with your Christmas mail. I hope it will not be lost because I should like to join your friends in wishing you a very blessed and joyous Christmas. On Christmas Eve, Good Friday, and Easter morning the preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the happiest man in the world. Committed to his heart and lips is the message of the Grace of God in Jesus Christ. It has often seemed to me that especially at the season of the Nativity of our Lord it is a good idea for a preacher to “let God be God” more strictly than ever before — let God speak in the Christmas lessons — let Him talk to the heart of the twentieth century in the Christmas hymns — let Him haunt our forgetful age with the age-old story of the Word made flesh.

I wish you much strength and joy for your Christmas messages this year.

* * *

I am happy to report that our total enrollment exceeded our expectations this year. Our final figure is 1846 of which about seventeen hundred are on the campus. Others are in extension work and special courses. This is an increase of approximately 9.3% over last year. The national increase was approximately 3%.

We are still deeply interested in the names of good prospective students. If, therefore, you have a moment’s time after the Christmas holidays to jot down the names of high school seniors and juniors who should be persuaded to come to Valpo I shall be most grateful.

* * *

I am also happy to report that our first meetings with some of Synod’s representatives concerning the introduction of a two-year parochial school teacher training course for women on our campus have been quite successful. It is evident, of course, that there are several problems which must receive our careful consideration so that both the interests of Synod as well as of the University are safeguarded. On the other hand, I have been unable to see any insurmountable obstacles, and I believe we shall be able to perform a direct, practical service to Synod by introducing this work on our campus. In view of the fact that it will require comparatively few adjustments in our total program, it will undoubtedly also save Synod a sum of money. I shall try to keep you informed concerning the development of this work as our meetings with the representatives of Synod proceed.

* * *

Shortly after he left the University of Illinois, President George D. Stoddard delivered a remarkable address at Western Michigan College under the title “Paranoids versus the People.” Since he had just been fired by the Board of Trustees, it is entirely possible that he was thinking of some of the men who were responsible for his unceremonious farewell to the University. His observations, however, may apply to many more people in the Twentieth Century. In fact, I am very sure that I have met the people he describes even within the boundaries of ecclesiastical organizations. Dr. Stoddard offers a series of definitions of the paranoid:

" — The paranoid is emotionally allergic — the least reserve or eyebrow lifting on the part of others will be for him ample evidence of dire intent. He will return it a hundredfold with deep suspicion."

" — The paranoid, feeling inferior and inadequate, overcompensates. If called upon to crack a nut — just a little nut — like something out of Rube Goldberg, he will contrive an elaborate mechanism with himself at the controls. The one nut he cannot crack is himself."

" — The paranoid is a victim of overblown self-esteem. Since he would save the world through the perfect formula, book or machine, he is not, in such a mighty business, to be deterred by rules, laws or social customs. He goes straight to the heart of things — at least in his own mind, if you will permit the mixed anatomy — and no trifles, like you or me, are to stand in his way. If, however, you do get in the way of such a driving personality, do not be overfearful. He is not really attacking you; he is defending his own image of himself, often most persuasively. He attacks with words, although he can become dangerous if suddenly blocked off from his favorite escape hatches. Chiefly he develops an uncanny ability to make other persons angry or fearful and that for him is a sufficient power. The paranoid’s world being a world of persons obviously beneath him in virtue, he secretly enjoys the posture of fear and submission in others. Like some unholy god, he likes to put his foot on a quivering neck. Hence the sure antidote — do not quiver!"

" — The ego of the paranoid is defective; it has to be rounded out in ways that are peculiar. Beyond evil himself, he finds it in others, usually as if he had been commissioned by God as First Informer, First
Inquisitor and First Executioner. Nobody could be more dangerous than his dangerous ones — nobody more obviously guilty. The power of his own hate is thus given to a religiously zealous pursuit of the enemy as perceived."

November 10th was the birthday of Martin Luther. When 63 years later he died, it is said that his last written words were: "We are beggars before God." This is perhaps our whole answer. Is this a philosophy of life and history and eternity? I am a beggar — but a beggar only in one place — before God — not before men. I walk with kings! What kind of a God do I have? A remembering and forgiving God — God the Father of the prodigal son and his selfish brother and my sin — God who does not wait for the lost sheep to come home but goes to the gate of our darkness through night and storm to find it — God who will not and cannot forget or tire or tarry or give up — God mindful, incarnate and crucified in the person of Jesus Christ. To Him I can come. Touched as I am by the stain of sin I can know that I have found the answer to the greatest question of the first, the twentieth and the thirteenth centuries: "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (From a sermon preached in Chicago, November 9, 1952.)

A few quotations from G. K. Chesterton lifted out of a forthcoming article on that curious figure in the CRESSET. It is known that Chesterton was always intrigued by what he called the "sordid" and "reasonable" pagan virtues of "justice" and "temperance" and the "gay, exuberant and unreasonable" virtues of "faith, hope and charity." "Justice," he said, "consists in finding out a certain thing due to a certain man and giving it to him. Temperance consists of finding out the proper limit of a particular indulgence and adhering to that. But charity means pardoning what is unpardonable, loving unlovable people. Hope means hoping when things are hopeless. And faith means believing the incredible — or they are no virtues at all."

Here is something for anyone who lives in the ten thousand villages and small towns scattered across our land. Chesterton writes: "A man who lives in a small community lives in a much larger world. He knows much more of the fierce varieties and uncompromising divergences of men. The reason is obvious. In a large community we can choose our companions. In a small community our companions are chosen for us ... We may love our friends because they are like us. We may like negroes because they are black, or German socialists because they are German socialists. But we have to love our neighbor because he is there — a much more alarming reason for a much more serious operation. He is the sample of humanity which is actually given us. Precisely because he may be anybody he is everybody. He is a symbol because he is an accident ... the same goes for our families." These are two excellent examples of the special and unique contribution Chesterton made to twentieth century thought. Beyond many others he had a remarkable ability to exaggerate the forgotten ... a very important contribution to our life and thought ...
"Guidance in the choice of music is provided in an official publication of the Church, ‘Music for Church Weddings.’ The rector will be glad to lend you a copy. The music should be in keeping with the sacred character of the service. For this reason, if music is desired, all arrangements for it should be made with the rector well in advance. It is expected that the regular organist of the church will play, for which he will receive a fee.

"Simplicity is in order in decorating the church. The preparation of the Altar is entrusted to the Altar Guild, and a member of the Guild is in charge of all decorations, even when an outside decorator works.

"A rehearsal is usually held on the day previous to the wedding. Only those in the wedding party should be present — bride, groom, best man, maid of honor, ushers, bridesmaids, and the parents of the bride. Flower girls and ring bearers are extraneous and distracting and therefore are not sanctioned by the Church. It is expected there will be careful preparation for the rehearsal and that all will come as if coming to a church service, complying with all our Church customs and regulations."

* * *

May I express the hope that you will not forget our Lutheran University on the day which has been set aside for our annual offering — Sunday, January 31. Approximately one-third of our income comes from our congregational offerings each year, and this support is very important in the general development of our program. Our salary scale for our professors is still very low. We should like to make other improvements in our offerings if we had the additional funds. Your support of the collection will, therefore, be deeply appreciated also this year. I am certain that a few words to your people will increase the amounts which we shall receive from your district treasurer.

If you should need any materials or any further information in preparation for the offering on January 31, I hope you will let me know. The support of our brethren in this regular effort is the keystone of our financial program.

While I am speaking about our financial support, I am sure that you will be interested to hear that the Lilly Endowment has again made a grant of $50,000 to the University. The interesting thing about this grant is that it is based on the general work of the school — has absolutely no strings attached, and is intended for current operations. I believe that it represents one of the most intelligent and thoughtful approaches to higher education in our country today. As you undoubtedly know, many of the gifts to higher education are set aside for special purposes or for capital funds. Meanwhile, colleges and universities do not have enough money to pay the professor and the janitor. With foresight and acumen the Board of Directors of the Lilly Endowment has recognized this basic problem and has been most generous in supporting several colleges in the State of Indiana. It seems to me that such intelligent philanthropy means much for the continuance of our American way of life and the strength of free enterprise.

* * *

May I again extend to you my very good wishes for a Christmas of peace and joy. Once more you will be able to say to your people that the nature of Jesus Christ reconciled earth and heaven and that all things meet in Him, God and man. This is the greatest fact of all history. It is the center of the world’s hope and the world’s faith. To say it now — in the middle of the twentieth century — is life’s highest privilege.

Very sincerely yours,

O. P. Kretzmann

President

P.S.

Perhaps you can use a part of this in your church bulletin around Christmas time. A year ago Ivor Brown, drama critic for the London Observer, wrote an article in the Saturday Review under the title "Christmas, Body & Soul." It contains some thoughts which probably have come to every faithful pastor again and again. The interesting thing about them is their source. Mr. Brown is certainly not a member of the clergy. He is not even a churchgoer. Mr. Brown writes:

"Christmas churchgoing fills pews that are usually empty. This applies especially to the Anglican congregations, which have the largest proportion of intermittent attenders. Many people like to go to church on festal days, when flowers are in full display and familiar hymns are sung.

"This, I cannot help thinking, is cheating. It is using the church as a convenience. Those who believe should believe every week in the year and not only when sentiment stirs them, as at Christmas and Easter, and when the service has traditional appeals. To look in now and again is like using the church to get christened, married, and buried (with more beauty of language and of rite than a secular treatment of the occasion provides) and then never going near the place again. Such exploitation of the church seems to me inexcusable. Those who will not take the discipline should not share in the privileges. If the Faith is not worth their attention on the dull Sundays — not to mention the week-days — what right have the perfunctory worshippers to share in the attractions on the festival days?

"As I am not a Churchman it may be said that I have no right to speak. But I cannot be forbidden to comment on the logic of those who treat the benefits of religion in such an arbitrary way, occasionally using them, but generally passing by. What reason can be given for seeking a Church marriage and then giving no further heed or service to the Church and to its modest demands? To stay away from church altogether, to have a civil marriage, and to end with a secular cremation, is within the rights of any citizen now that, after centuries, we have defeated the old bigoted persecutions of the independent. It is also perfectly logical. But what is not within the bounds of right thinking is to admit a Sacred Mystery by occasional genuflections and then to forget all about a matter so supreme for fifty Sundays out of fifty-two. If religion, any religion, is what it claims to be, then it is something so tremendous that you must either reject it with due reflection or accept it with due devotion. To potter about with it, like the Christmas Day church-goer, is to be both illogical and insensitive.

"During a recent Christmas I received from my local parish church an invitation which struck me as really lamentable in its tone:

'Christmas Day is the Birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ —
Will you let Him share it with you at one or more of these services?'

"Will I let Him? Should not I be told, firmly and even fiercely, that if I believe in the facts of the Christian story, then it is a..."
Perhaps the following notes will be of some small help to you in your preparation for your Christmas sermons. If they begin a train of thought, their printing here will have served its purpose. All of them are from the volume "Christmas Garlands" written a few years ago by The CRESSET Associates. Most of the quotations below are from men like the sainted Dr. Theodore Greelbrner and Dr. W. G. Polack.

"FEAR NOT"

"These were the first words which the startled shepherds on the plains near Bethlehem heard when the angelic messenger appeared to them on that memorable first Christmas night. The reaction of the shepherds is a common experience of man since the day when Adam hid himself from the presence of God in Eden. The consciousness of man's guilt gives him reason to fear that any message from heaven is an announcement of God's wrath.

"We are living in times when fear has gripped the hearts of men perhaps as never before. At home economic and social problems seem to defy all efforts toward their solution and are becoming ever more acute. On the international horizon the clouds are growing darker. The press and the radio sound alarming notes which cause men to ask: 'What of tomorrow?' Just now at this moment a radio broadcast describes the plans for the construction of an atom bomb shelter under a skyscraper in one of our large cities. The thought is very thought it is one that makes men frantic. But there is a scriptural text: "Weeping may last through the night, but joy, O Joy, beyond all gladness.

"It was God's angel who appeared to the shepherds. God's glory shone round about them. Christ, the Lord, lay in a manger. God's host of angels suddenly stood by that single messenger. 'God in the highest' received the honor and glory of that celestial chorus. God it was whom the shepherds believed when they hastened to Bethlehem. God it was whom they praised when they found the Infant Jesus.

"There was, indeed, another side to that first Christmas. Mary and Joseph were human. The Christ in the manger had a human body. The shepherds were human. There were other non-divine elements present in that first Christmas. There were the fields, and the sheep, and the darkness, and the narrow lanes and humble homes in Bethlehem. And there were the cave and the manger. There were the swaddling cloths. There was much else besides which was not divine. What makes the Christmases of today what it is, the sweetest story ever told, is this divine element existing in a human environment. It is an exciting aspect of the divine掺入 human life."

"This divine element in the Christmas story is its crowning glory. Disregard it, as novelists who have written delightful Christmas stories have often done, and the account of the first Christmas is smeared of its singular beauty. Omit that element as you celebrate Christmas at home in the company of your loved ones or far away from home, and all alone, and Christmas leaves the heart empty. Dismiss the divine in Christmas as you have cast the Christmas gifts and as you contribute generously to help those who are in need, and Christmas Day ends in a pang of disillusionment.

"But see and believe the divine in Christmas: the Christ of God lying in the manger, the glory of God on the plains of Bethlehem, God's messenger announcing the good news, the hymn of the angelic chorus which gives glory to God, God's power working on the shepherds, and then the praises of these shepherds, sung to this same God - and Christmas becomes a festival of inexpressible and abiding joy. For then it means that the Infant lying in the manger is man's only Savior, that He is the Savior of every sinner, that only God's love for a sinful world moved Him to send into it His only Son, that man becomes a believer in the divine message because God himself created that faith, and that this faith lays hold on eternal life."

"We remember the famous paragraph from Alexander Smith concerning the now forgotten LYRA GERMANICA: This book contains surely one of the most touching of human compositions — a song of Luther's. The great Reformer's music resounds to this day in our churches; and one of the rude hymns he wrote has such a step of thunder in it that the father of Frederick the Great — so Mr. Carlyle tells us — used to call it 'God Almighty's Grenadier March.' This one I speak of is of another mood and is soft as tears. To appreciate it thoroughly, one must think of the burly, resolute, humorous, and withal tender-hearted man and of the work he accomplished. He it was, the Franklin's kite, led by the highest hand, that went up into the papal thundercloud hanging black over Europe; and the angry fire that broke upon it burnt it not, and in roars of boisterous thunder the apparition collapsed, and the sun of truth broke through the ink of false gods on the nations once again. He it was who, when advised not to trust himself in Worms, declared: 'Although there be as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the housetops, I will go.' He it was who, when brought to bay in the splendid assemblage, said: 'It is neither safe nor prudent to do ought against conscience. Here stand I — I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen. The rock cannot move — the lightnings may splinter it. Think no more, and then let Luther's Christmas Carol, with its tender inscription, 'Luther's Christmas Carol,' with its tender inscription, by Hans, 1533.' Coming from another pen, the stanzas were perhaps not much: coming from HIS, they move one like the finest eloquence. This song went deep into the hearts of the common people, and is still sung from the dome of the Kreuz-Kirche in Dresden before daybreak on Christmas morning."

"St. Luke's account of the Nativity begins by pointing to the events which marked God's fullness of time. Then the narrative proceeds toward the climax, the appearance of the angelic hosts on the plains of Bethlehem. But the continuity of its hope and joy-inspiring tone is broken, as it were, by the Evangelist with the words: 'there was no room for them in the inn.'

"No room for Jesus has been and is today the world's greatest tragedy. Those people in Bethlehem to whom the returning shepherds made known what they had heard and seen on that memorable first Christmas might merely wander at those things which were told them but in their hearts was no room for the Savior. Herod had no room for Him; and later during His public ministry our Lord encountered many who refused Him a place in their hearts. The pages of history throughout the centuries reveal the great tragedies in human experiences are based on the fact that men had no room for Jesus.

"When we look about us today, we observe much evidence that Jesus is crowded out of the hearts of men. Among these are the increasing commercialization of Christmas and the orgies and revelries which mark many Christmas celebrations in homes and public places. These are 'No Vacancy' placards with which men barricade their hearts to the Savior, who stands at their door, seeking admission."