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Dear Brother: The main question concerning Denver is “For Whom Did The Bells Toll?”

There is a strange horn or whistle in downtown Denver which is totally unlike any other in the American heartland. Clearly it was bought or stolen from one of our trans-Atlantic liners, probably from one of the great Queens which no longer grace the north Atlantic. It served as a queer undertone for our discussions. It seemed to be the sound of incipient loneliness.

We were sitting in the Denver auditorium listening to the eighth speech on the desirability of raising the pensions of widows of pastors from $99.00 a month to $104.00. I listened very closely because I knew that Mother would be delighted that Opa’s contribution to the Church for over fifty years would now be recognized more abundantly. All her life she has been an avaricious woman, often buying aging pot roast just to save a few cents, or cutting down our knee pants to fit Mickey rather than going out and buying some new ones. If anyone was really tight, it was Mother. She will now be most pleased with the raise from $99.00 to $104.00.

And then in the very middle of this discussion, or any other, the deep whistle would blow, transporting us in memory to New York to the cold nights in a harbor of fog and bringing memories beyond tears. In the sound of that horn was the wild, wide adventure of the beckoning sea, the loneliness of parting, and, shall I say, the shadow of impending doom. One always knew that there might be a great dark iceberg lurking beyond the narrows. I do not know why (it was a different sound) I was reminded twice a day of John Donne’s telling words: “Ask not for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” It tolled for the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod which was in danger of becoming an island — and the whistle had a warning sound. We were beginning to forget why we came to the Kingdom for such a time as this.

Perhaps this is the best way for us to reflect our worm’s-eye view of the Denver convention. As the narrows loomed ahead we dumped an experienced pilot and headed for the wild seas of 2000 A.D. Our booming horn warned other craft to get out of our way; we were going it alone. But not quite. The horn sounded louder as we reached the open sea.

Voice of the brother in the third row: “Drop the limping metaphor and tell us in your own childish way just what happened at Denver.” Let me strike a personal note first: As I registered I suddenly realized that it was forty-five years since I first attended a synodical convention. All these years I have worn the blue badge marked “Advisor.” Not once had I attained that mystic red badge marked “Voting” and thereby become a Roman citizen with all the powers, rights, and privileges thereunto appertaining. Even now when I meet a citizen with a red badge I step off the sidewalk and bow. The contemptuous irony of that perennial blue badge began to overwhelm me. Forty-five years as Advisor — and no one had ever asked me for advice. There was one exception. One morning in Denver a youth delegate asked me for the way to the men’s room. At last I felt I had arrived. The younger generation was asking for a sense of direction.

But back to the brother’s question about the convention. What really happened? I really do not know exactly. I have some evidence provided by my five senses which I still regretfully have. There was more politicking, maneuvering and plotting than ever before — separate lodging for groups in separate hotels — meetings late at night to plan what the disciples called “strategy” — people all over the place whispering especially when an election was going on — good lectures by R. R. Caemmerer — ads in the daily Denver press extolling the virtues of candidates (shades of C. F. W. Walther, F. Pieper and F. Pfotenhauer) — the constant distribution of little mimeographed sheets inviting me to certain meetings where I would learn the truth above some servant of the living God — a floor captain in the aisles at open hearings directing his troops to the microphone at the proper time — classmate ignoring classmates who were “on the other side” — more bad doctrine and slanted exegesis than I have heard in forty-five years — a gracious patriarch of four score years calling to me in the narthex: “Hey, young man!” — the befuddled brother at microphone 17: “Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask five questions” — the youth delegates who paid close but cynical attention — the ladies in white with the ten gallon hats who walked up and down the aisles looking like Jenny Lind on a mission — the new synodically approved way of passing on really hot news (you lift your hand, either one, with its back against your lips and hiss) — watching the experienced delegates who seemed to be sleeping through a long report but always woke up at precisely the right moment; they used the sudden silence as an alarm clock — the climactic vote on unification, restoration, unity and peace.” My unscriptural and illiterate comment: “Me, too.”

But there were many, many good things. Some excellent resolutions on Missions — the statement on women’s suffrage (Theophilus’ good wife: “I am glad that I have the right to attend voters’ meetings — but I wouldn’t be caught dead in one”) — some good resolutions straightening out the synodical handbook — and many others.
A few other worm's-eye notes: E. J. Friedrich, speaking at the memorial service from a high place — reminding the delegates of the great fellowship of the saints who had been in the way with us. He sounded like Dr. Franz Pieper in 1932 — my meeting with George Shabota, whom I saw for the first time in Japan twenty years ago — President Lloyd Goetz of the North Wisconsin District, as chairman of the committee on Church Relations — quickly and distinctively on the side of the angels — speeches from and for youth visitors — ladies, bless their patient and loyal hearts, gathering in the rear in the so-called observers' seats; you could see they were no longer knitting as they had at previous conventions; they applauded only mildly when their Magna Charta was adopted — meeting a brother in the narthex in the morning after the ballots on the fellowship resolution had been locked up for the night; he wanted to know whether he should have continued to pray during the night even though he knew that the ballots were already cast — some of the finest moments came when President Harms asked: "What does microphone seven want?"; it added an impersonal note to the proceedings which was most healthful. If I remember correctly, at 9:16 a.m. on July 16th President Harms called for the presentation of the fellowship question. In two minutes and forty-six seconds, 61 brethren had lined up behind eight microphones...

Footnote to History: All this happened exactly 477 years to the day after Columbus set sail for America. It was also the anniversary of the first dropping of the atomic bomb at Los Alamos in 1945, and the very day the astronauts left for the moon...

★★★★★

Before I close the books on Denver I must report the following epistle from Theophilus, who for several days was all over the place:

Dear O.P.;

I am thinking of writing a book. When this fever has seized me in past you have warned against it and advised me to take a pill instead. But this is different. The book will be called "One Man's Denver." Maybe you can think of a better title. Like every best seller this book will be full of tears and laughter. The tears will be those of a worm like me as he sees a great and good man take into his body the darts and arrows of a host of Liliputians while his spirit grows to gigantic proportions. The laughter will be that of the great cloud of witnesses who looked down on us at Denver, who could see the end from the beginning, the Man of Galilee who had twelve contentious and ambitious disciples and whose name we were all given at our baptism, as well as that other man whose name we all bear, not to speak of the fathers on this side of the water as they heard themselves quoted against each other. The one ingredient of a modern best seller that I can't work in is sex. Maybe a resolution to allow women to vote in the affairs of the church can take care of that. After all, as one astute observer remarked, that resolution did bring us crashing into the nineteenth century. If I don't have to spend too much time explaining the Denver convention to my ALC and LCA brother pastors, to say nothing of the Baptist and Methodist brethren across the street, I plan to have the book ready for the Milwaukee convention. It will have 100 pages and will cost $7.50 per copy in hard cover for serious students of church history, and ten cents per copy in paperback for my friends. I know that most of your friends don't read. As an inducement to them I am including as appendices the detailed instructions sent to delegates on how to vote on issues, how to obstruct the convention proceedings when things are going well, and whom to contact when advice is needed any time of day or night. This latter will be a collectors' item in 1980 when the three large Lutheran churches in America will become one Church to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the Book of Concord.

Elder Sauerbraten met me at the airport when I returned from Denver. He was driving the horse and buggy that he keeps in his barn to show the grandchildren when he wants to remind them of how things used to be. We had a twelve mile ride home. I was sick of restaurant food and wanted to get my teeth into some of Mother Theophilus' cooking. I also wanted to get into my slippers and sit around in my undershirt without having to worry whether someone was trying to see if I was wearing a fishhook or not. (You remember that I told you that all the delegates who had joined the group that was committed to dumping Harms and to voting against all resolutions that would express our character as a Lutheran Church in the 20th century wore the fishhook as their lodge emblem.) So I wanted to get home fast and stand on the porch and breathe deep and look at the steeple of the church against the sky. So we jogged along for a few miles with Elder Sauerbraten whistling "The Church's One Foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord" a little offkey. It got too much for me. "What's with the horse and buggy? What's wrong with the Lincoln Continental?" I asked sweetly in my best catechism voice. Now Sauerbraten, as you know, is not a subtle character. In fact most of the time the line between his foot and his mouth is short and direct. "You know, Rev." he said, "I kinda thought you would ask me that. When I read the newspaper accounts of what was happening in Denver, of how Harms was put out of office by a machine that Mayor Daley would have been proud of, of how the ALC fellowship was voted in, of how our membership in the Lutheran World Federation was voted down, I said to myself, I bet he's confused. I bet he doesn't know which side is up anymore. So I said in my ear, what he needs is a lesson on how things work. So I went to the barn and hitched up the horse and buggy. I thought it would do us both good to see the horse's legs move and watch the wheels on the buggy turn. I don't have any questions about what makes the buggy run. A lot of those folks honking their horns at us don't know all the fine points about how their cars run. All they know is that they get there faster. I know how I get there, because the horse puts one foot in front of the other. That's something to remember." This was a long speech for Sauerbraten. When he finished he picked up his whistling at the fourth stanza and reached out for the buggy whip. I took it out of his hand and put it in the socket. "Thanks" I said, "we've got time. Let's jog along while I think a little about what I'm going to tell the congregation about the convention next Sunday."

Yours,

Theophilus
LIGHT AT EVENING

Almost exactly one month after I wearily said farewell to Denver, I found that I was supposed to appear at a conference with the Circuit Counselors of the Texas District. I packed my brief case with two shirts, a red notebook and some jottings on a frayed cuff. I must confess I took the big jet to Dallas reluctantly and somewhat blindly. I really wanted to stay home and eat some more aspirin.

Nevertheless and however, I finally landed in Texas to meet with the Counselors of that far-flung and mysterious District. Again I must admit that I was worried about this straying from my beaten path. I knew that I would gather no dollars for Valparaiso University from these brethren in the diaspora. If they or their people had any money it ought to have gone somewhere in Texas rather than to the institution of which I was still a member.

Let me say now, this was the finest thing that has happened to me for many years. Suddenly I realized that beyond the bombast of Denver there were brethren who by divine mercy were the princes of the Kingdom, men who were guiding the whole process of which I had momentarily despaired. This, I thought, is where the water finally hits the wheel; and their joy over this ultimate process was like the joy of our Lord at Capernaum. And, too, I suddenly realized that this was not only an achievement of Texas but something really strong and lovely — a reflection of something which is going on all over the world. So that brother Theophilus, thrown into a momentary tizzy by Denver — whisperings in corners, sor of psychology who could have been ordained, so accurate and sympathetic was his reading of our sheets of yours, but be sure of one thing — this is the most naked power struggle since the first synod in the Kingdom.

The words begin to toll; "By virtue of my office." In other words, there will be no change in the sense of honor, integrity, loyalty and devotion to which the Missouri Synod has become accustomed. These are qualities which are not easily developed in an asullen conference in hotel rooms. But if our new president — to whom we owe not only respect but loyalty and support — will demonstrate again in our faithless disloyal time the idea of "Nisi Dominus" — its great humility and its great power — then Missouri will flame again.

This is now my hope. Denver was bad, very bad, indeed. One night when all of us were wandering home after the hours of grueling discussion I stopped at a corner and suddenly heard Theophilus pounding away at his sermon for Sunday, July 13th. At that moment he, I am sure, did not consider it very important. During the sermon Sauerbraten will be sleeping and the kids in the basement will be too noisy. Theophilus, I am sure, was not very happy.

And yet I must say again that Theophilus’ work this night is infinitely and lastly more important than all we did in Denver this day. **Did we by our motions and amendments, our substitute motions and calls for the question, our packing of the microphones, and our “strategic” moves save one single desperately lonely soul?** Did that bedraggled man in the last row of the visitors gallery whisper: “Lord, I believe. Help Thou my unbelief?” On my way home from Denver I may well remember that Theophilus — and his brethren in the thousands and millions — still holds the keys of the Kingdom. If there is thunder on the left tonight it is the echo of our Lord’s shaking of the head over what we did and said in Denver. He still loves us, but His love is a greater reflection of His insistent grace. For God so loves His church — despite her Councils and conventions, committees, and politicians, her emotions and counter-emotions — that He is willing to let us meet now and then to do some small guessing at the task He has given us to do. This afternoon, however, Theophilus will visit Grandma Himmelhoch who is still living on this side, though very reluctantly. All she says now is: "Warum bin ich noch nicht daheim?” He will tell her again about the serried ranks of angels waiting for her, and all will be well in the Kingdom — very well, indeed.

NI SI DOMINUS

I imagine something must be said about “the Harms matter.” This is a bad way of putting it, but you all know the story. It should be underscored that this was no defeat of a man, but a victory for an idea — the idea that Missouri’s destiny is isolation from the rest of Christendom — the idea that those who think otherwise are traitors and apostates — the idea that you can build the Kingdom by attacks on others who are desperately trying to lay another stone in Zion — by a blatant effort to get power. This is the way, they said, the Kingdom is built and Harms did not fit into that program. A few moments before I left Denver an ancient and wise brother called and said: “I don’t know what you are going to say in those yellow sheets of yours, but be sure of one thing — this is the most naked power struggle since the first synod in Jerusalem. There is only one thing wrong with the scenario; only one side really knew how to fight at synodical conventions. If Harms is a politician, I am Machiavelli. Keep the faith, Baby!” With this he hung up and I returned to packing my Sunday suit. I must confess I had not worn it, because in that mile high beautiful clean city there was too much dirt flying around.

Let us hear the conclusion of the matter (temporarily). This is not a Harms-Preus duel. It is rather a question whether one man will continue the traditions of another and of many who have gone before. The words begin to toll: “By virtue of my office.” In other words, there will be no change in the sense of honor, integrity, loyalty and devotion to which the Missouri Synod has become accustomed. These are qualities which are not easily developed in a sullen conference in hotel rooms. **But if our new president — to whom we owe not only respect but loyalty and support — will demonstrate again in our faithless disloyal time the idea of “Nisi Dominus” — its great humility and its great power — then Missouri will flame again.**

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THEOPHILUS A.D. 1 —

This fellow Theophilus is unpredictable. Having written me a letter about his homecoming from Denver he pops into the office just a week later. I eyed him very carefully: “Theophilus,” I said, “you look like the cat that ate the canary. You are suspiciously happy. What gives?” Theophilus smiled. That was the biggest news since “Garbo laughs.” I knew that he had been depressed since Denver, but now with the first two presidential pastoral letters of the new synodical administration in his hands he was beaming.

“The new era is here. Look at the President’s letter of July 22, the Festival of Mary Magdalene.” (Theophilus has leftover High Church tendencies.) “You know, this was the letter in which the President expressed surprise over the ‘Spontaneous vote of confidence’ he had received at Denver and promised that the new administration would ‘use’ Dr. Harms.”

How could I forget? “Read on,” I said. “I can’t picture you liking that letter, because it said that people don’t have to follow the ALC-fellowship resolution of Synod if they don’t want to.”

“That’s the point. It says more than that. It says what I’ve been waiting to hear for years. This is beautiful.”

“But I thought you were for ALC-fellowship. How can you appreciate this foot-dragging?”

Theophilus didn’t even take a moment for breath. “I wasn’t all that hot about the ALC. The ALC congregation down the block from us is like the little girl’s description of the ALC at Denver: conservative, self-satisfied, white middle-class, racist. I am not sure we’re in fellowship. But two miles away there is a ‘reine lehrisch, self-critical, black lower-class, not-yet-racist’ congregation with whom we really are in fellowship — only we’ve not been allowed to express it. Now we are.”

“How so?” My interest was rising higher.

“See what the President says? ‘No congregation is compelled to violate its principles’ because of a synodical resolution. I’m sure some resolution somewhere says we should not commune with the LCA, and not communing in our case was a violation of principles. I’ve waited 122 years for a synodical president to ask my congregation to act on conscience, and not to violate principles because of synodical resolutions.”

“I get it,” I said, getting it. “What’s so nice about the next go-slow letter of August 20th?”

(Ed. Note: Here followed a long exposition of the Synodical Handbook on missionary activities with heterodox persons which, Theophilus claimed, introduced a “whole new ball game.” In the middle of the discussions my tape recorder (which I had under the desk) broke down. I could hear its despairing buzz. The rest of this is from memory.)

“Theophilus,” I counseled, “don’t play that Handbook game — that’s too scribal!”

“You should talk — you’ve been following its letter for years; I recall when, in order to preach the Gospel, you had to truck around with an entourage of Missourians to read the Scriptures at Sunday Evening Clubs to keep in line with the Handbook. For the Gospel’s sake.”

I preferred not to be reminded. So I changed the subject. “The President will say he never said what you said.”

Theophilus came back, at once. “But he’s honest and he said it, and 6000 pastors know it. Of course, these are political documents. Those who live by politics have to live by politics. These letters are like actions in Washington designed to pacify the Thurmond flank — they leave the Chief Executive vulnerable on other flanks. Let him repudiate. Let him re-interpret. I go by the ipsissima verba. They are persuasive. Always interpret dark texts in the light of clear ones. I can’t wait for the next pastoral letter. It’s a new age.”

As Theophilus left, pastoral letters and Synodical Handbook in hand, (where it ought to be) I had to half-agree: it was a new age. Never before had I seen Theophilus come out for literalism in order to be free. It seemed to be, indeed, a whole new ball game.

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Hutesium et clamor: These words are Latin — used here to demonstrate my learning. Even if you, like me, got only a C— in that language, you may remember that the words are the Latin equivalent for the English “hue and cry.” They can be very useful. The next time you are confronted with a fleeting aberration in theology — or an obvious heresy in the Christian News (our German friends call it “die Theologie der Abwehr”) — or a popular uproar over the latest “cause celebre” — raise yourself to your full height and say “hutesium et clamor”... “et actio diabolica.” That ought to throw your enemies for a loop and, if repeated often enough, may get you a call to one of our seminaries.

These profound thoughts came to me now and then when I tried to fathom the reason for the “hutesium et clamor” over the “God is Dead” theology. This was obviously a silly idea.

I even went so far as to gather material on the life story of some of the proponents of this most insane of all heresies. I stopped, however, when a very good friend of one of the “God is Dead” theologians (plural because they all have different theories about the cause of His demise) told me “he would sell his grandmother for a headline on page 3 of the Daily News; for a lead article on page 1 he would sell his mother, too.” With that I quit my research. I knew what I wanted to know — and it explains many other strange events in the Kingdom.

Is this perhaps at least a part of the story? “God is Dead” because some of us killed his major enemy over two generations ago? Did the murder of a personal, peripatetic Devil lead us to believe that we could go on from there to try our hand on Him Who had already laughed and was still laughing? This might help to explain the peculiar “Gottwidrigkeit” of some post-modern thought. I turned my chair to the window and watched two robins in the rain demonstrating the continuing activity of the living God.
AN APPROPRIATE SYNODICAL HIP HIP: In all the shouting over at Denver we have almost forgotten that 1969 marks the hundredth anniversary of Concordia Publishing House, "Pibble Haus" to you. Ordinarily anniversaries do not raise my blood pressure; you get to them by just living long enough. CPH's milestone is different. It seldom toots its own horn. It should be joyfully noted that over the years CPH has become one of the best and strongest publishing houses in the land. It has intelligently struck the golden mean between profits and service; in other words, CPH will publish a good book that the church needs even if only the author and his family buy copies. It has also, Deo gratias, survived an obsolete and clumsy system of censorship.

There is much to the feel of a book (weight, size, shape, type) and the men at CPH do these aesthetics very well. Always beneath their evident loyalty is an awareness of the confessional position of Synod and a highly intelligent appraisal of the needs of the church.

Humanly speaking (and how else can we speak) much of all this is due to the wise leadership of an able Board of Directors and the always charismatic management of two men—Edwin E. Seuel and O. A. Dorn—especially the latter (for Seuel I was just a distant admirer) who carried CPH through the great storms and deep waters of the last thirty years. He did this with high intelligence and profound commitment.

If you have reached three score years you will recall that thirty years ago "Atch" Dorn and I worked in the same old dilapidated house on the south side of Chicago. It was the headquarters of the International Walther League (youth-led and issue-oriented). Technically, as determined by the organizational charts by which we measure our nearness to our Lord (lines, boxes, diagonal lines, etc.) I was really the head man. I was on the second floor; all the work was done on the first floor—under the direction of Dr. Dorn. Our conversations were always brief and decisive. I would say: "I would like to do this." He would say: "We don't have the money—but..." That "but" made him a valuable churchman. It meant that if your project was in line with the polity of Bethlehem and Calvary he would join in. So a happy and hearty "hip-hip" for CPH, O. A. Dorn and all his 750 co-workers today. They have done what they could—and they have done it well.

MRS. THEOPHILUS: A NEW TASK

The cry of youth "Tell it like it is!" is a curious echo of the ancient elusive goal of historians to write "Wie es so eigentlich gewesen ist." It is curious because the demands of youth normally have more implications; they feel that the older generation is inclined to lie and deceive about things as they are. We just simply do not tell the truth. In the minds of many historians, however, the demand "wie es so eigentlich gewesen ist" is a professional requirement. To be an honest and honorable historian you must try with all your might "to tell it like it was."

These comments came to mind while I was reading a congregational history. Normally, by the way, these stories have a strange fascination—the reduction of the Kingdom to its essential basic humanness. In this particular instance there had been a deep personal split in the parish about forty years ago. It was handled by the writer of this history as if it were a momentary difference between the Cherubim and Seraphim. Nobody was to blame, and I almost succumbed to the urge to rise and holler "Tell it like it was!" Sauerbraten's father was involved in this particular fight—he was never a model of peacefulness and humility. All this strengthens me in my conviction that all congregation histories should be written by pastors' wives. Even you, my brother, should not write them because you might be inclined to forget that Satan was sitting in the back row at one of these Donnybrooks we call voters' meetings.

No, this is clearly a job for the "gal." Having seen how much her husband suffered in this quarrel, she will dip her pen in justice and righteous anger. I am even ready to suggest that the Concordia Historical Institute preserve congregational histories only when they are written by pastors' wives. Such a policy would result in startling, honest reading for our children and children's children.

A VITAL CRUSADE

Even though I am retired, there are certain crusades which I must finish before the final bell chimes. I am devoting some time these days to the elimination from our vocabulary of certain words which have long since come to the end of the road. A few of them are: confrontation—secularization—situational—racism (this lost its meaning when I heard an LHRRA leader called a racist)—youth-led—issue-oriented. I added the last two compound words when I was informed by a lovely teenager that she was now completely issue-oriented for the first time in her life. Apparently Confirmation had not done it.

But our semantic suspicion should not stop here. Denver was again a brilliant demonstration of the misuse and corruption of words. "Concerned" was still all over the place. When I wanted to express my violent opposition to something, I said: Mr. Chairman, I am concerned." The word "politicking" had a rough time, too. For both "sides" (I hate that term) "politicking" seemed to mean any conversation between Christians—"dialog" on a low level—its relative "lowness" always decided by your opponents.

A comparatively new word at Denver was "polarized." When you saw a real dog-fight coming over the hill, we were polarized. This is an excellent example of a good scientific word going down the drain of our human weaknesses. Suggestion: Every time you read the word "polarized" in the next four years, say to yourself: "The guy is talking about 'controversy, splits, fights,' but he's afraid to use the right words. He also says 'comfort station' for "toilet."

Summa summarerum: Make a list of words that have gone the broad and easy way, put them under the pad on your desk, and read them once a day. Your sanity will be applauded by all linguists and lexicographers.
PROOF OF ORTHODOXY

Once a year I demonstrate my orthodoxy as a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod—beyond the shadow of any doubt—by reading the Statistical Year Book from cover to cover. The boys in charge of that formidable undertaking are careful and exacting authors. Their task is to quantify the work of the Holy Spirit (for the past twelve months) with careful, cold eyes. In one way the results are not final; there will be another accounting on the last and longest day, and the questions will not be the same. Meanwhile, the editors of the Statistical Year Book do very well, indeed. If the Kingdom can ever be measured and counted, they can do it—and with remarkable accuracy and precision. Of course, I can never forget the fact that behind these cold figures there are blazing stories—of the brother who in a hospital has chased a human soul to the gates of hell—the brother who never lets go—and alas, the brother who has found a comfortable spot within the Kingdom and is willing to wait it out until the magnificent and final ways of the Holy Spirit are revealed.

Meanwhile I have learned many things. I hope my statistical brethren will not be too disturbed when I report that I often read between the lines. Thus, under the rubric “Communion Registration” the faithful communion of Grandma Himmelhoch at her bedside once a week rates a triple star. The total contributions are not revealing at all until I hear what Sauerbraten and his relatives did last year. Then there are the brethren who put down round numbers in each column. What are they doing? It is a little hard to tell. Or, what is the meaning of congregations below 150 communicants? There seems to be too many of those. The round numbers can be properly understood if one assumes that they are there to confuse the counselor who will come soon to claim his synodical pound of flesh.

Yes, the Statistical Year Book is fascinating reading. It may not be Shakespeare or Milton, and it certainly is not the music of the spheres. On the other hand, it reflects calmly and statistically the army of God moving toward the final judgment.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

AFTER ALL—

This day the first cool September wind disturbs the maple beyond my window to remind me that the year is in change again. Perhaps this was our great trouble at Denver. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod suddenly found itself face to face with the burning focus of the three sanctities of history—the past, the present, and the future. Unhappily and unprepared, we misread our past, misunderstood (in many cases) our present, and closed our eyes to the future.

A total recall of our three sanctities is desperately important as we remember and forget Denver. Clinging to our eternal heritage we shall not be confused by shifting winds of doctrine, we shall not mistake means for ends, and we shall always be ready to place our mortality at the feet of Him Who has made us immortal. Our heritage will give us humility and power and peace in a time and in a world which has lost them all. Unified and consecrated by our common heritage and our common destiny we shall even now go on from victory to victory. It remains for us only to work, and as we work to look up now and then to watch the shadows lengthen and the hour grow late, knowing that for us and our work alone, the building of the Kingdom in time, the world still stands. When our work is done and the work of those who follow after us, God’s clocks will stop.

In Him,

O. P. Kretzmann