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O.P. Kretzmann
Valparaiso University

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Dear Brother:

I had really hoped to leave you with your reading of Chemnitz until Christmas, but there were too many loose notes lying on my desk. The stuff on the Detroit convention is dated, but I thought a last lingering echo, especially Theophilus' reaction would help prepare us for the next convention. So here goes—and have a thoughtful Reformation Day.

One of the disturbing things about the convention was the strange use of the word "innovator." The phrase "these innovators" was used by a number of brethren who were opposed to "innovation." What distressed me was the fact that the use of the word is an innovation in itself. Where were the good old strong ecclesiastical words like "heretic," "false teacher," "schismatic" and so forth? All of them were gone, and all we had left was the namby-pamby word "innovator"—a word which could be used equally well for the inventor of the steam engine. Several times, it is true, the mountains trembled and roared and labored, but all that came out was the mousy "innovator." I really felt that some of the concerned brethren really did not have their heart in it. The use of the word was disturbing because it seemed to imply that "innovation" per se was somehow sinful. One also felt somehow that a few of the brethren would have liked to use the old, strong words but instinctively felt that to apply these words to conservative synodical officials, mission boards, highly trained theologians, would be the ultimate reductio ad absurdum. The intemperate language of the Council of Trent, ridiculous today, seemed to flash over our brethren like a warning signal.

Heart-warming was the genuine friendliness with which Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, President of the LCA, Dr. Frederick Schiotz, President of the ALC and The Lutheran World Federation, Dr. Paul Empie, the Executive Director of the National Lutheran Council, were greeted by the delegates. They offered a standing ovation both at the beginning and the end of the speeches by the distinguished guests. The ovation at the beginning was good manners; the ovation at the end was brotherliness. The staid, cool Missouri Synod came as close to "three cheers" as it ever will in our time.

Federal aid to parochial schools won out 291 to 252. This was one place where some of the arguments on both sides were completely irrelevant and unrealistic. The atmosphere was emotional and political rather than churchly, and some delegates had forgotten that a man named Goldwater had lost an election seven months earlier.

The new Isagogics: A learned brother said that Jonah was a real historic figure and that if he were living today he would be wearing the red badge of an accredited delegate at the convention. In the hope that Jonah had made it, the brethren applauded.

Some church historian tells me that back in 1915, just fifty years ago, Stoeckhardt and Pieper were accused of causing dissension in Synod. It was at this particular moment that Pieper made his famous statement: "If these irresponsible charges continue to be made, then we are a 'Lumpensynode.' " I am sorry that I am unable to translate that. The closest I can come is "a Synod of bums."

What were we afraid of? It is hard to tell, but I think it was "false doctrine." Now this is always a real and legitimate fear—but when it is translated into a paralytic worship of the status quo it results in a tragic forgetfulness of the only way true doctrine can be preserved—not in the ice box of systematic theology, but out on the battlefields of history, tried and purged in the fires of life and time, willing to take the risk of God—so that more souls might be saved and the imperative trumpet of truth be clearly heard in our late hour. If there ever was one place where the parable of the talents applies, it is in the doctrinal talents given to the Church. Bury them, and they will never catch fire in the souls of men:
carry them out into the crowded ways of men where they will be denied, tested, strengthened and purified—and they will bring men once more face to face with the Alpha and Omega of all doctrine, our Lord Jesus Christ. And so—we still believe in the Holy Spirit and his brooding also over our doctrine.

* * *

Theophilus, with whom I discussed these matters in the second balcony said: "Now you are really getting too serious. Your job in the Kingdom is to comment on affairs—like a butterfly flitting from flower to flower. No heavy, heady stuff for you." I nodded in agreement.

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Worm's Eye View: There was a steady stream of resolutions for almost ten days. An observer would naturally ask: Do they really mean anything at all? Theophilus and I discussed this matter one night at a local bistro. "The thing you forget," said Theophilus, "is that behind every one of these resolutions is a group of devoted people for whom a resolution, which means very little to you, means something tremendous for them—the green light for some cherished plans, some needed money for a new project, new workmen in some far corner of the planet."

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Nomination for the worst pun of the convention: "The Utics have always been members of Synod, but this guy Herman Utics is the worst of the lot."

* * *

One thing became perfectly clear as the convention wore on: Synod dislikes ambitious people. Let it be nosed abroad that a brother is actively running for an office, and he is a dead duck. One bad result is, of course, that some brethren have developed a real talent for looking coy and uninterested. A partial list of these would follow, but the printer tells me we haven't enough space.

* * *

Cheers Section: The Lutheran Confessions were quoted on the floor of the convention at least six times in two days. This is a new record high.

For the brother who took first prize for the understatement of the convention in the discussion of women's suffrage in the church: "We will be vexed by this question for a long time."

For the sotto voce from the front row: "Yep. As long as we have women around."

Perhaps there should be a left-handed salute also to the delegate who spoke warmly against women's suffrage in the church, then ended his speech: "I know I will have problems when I get home." The convention wished him well.

For the older brother who sent me a note: "Never use the words 'never' and 'always.' Outside of the Word, they cover too much territory."

* * *

Moments when Luther, Walther, Stoeckhardt, Pieper, turned over in their graves: When a good brother told the convention how happy he was that his congregation had reduced its contribution to Synod by eighty or ninety per cent . . . when another brother in an open group meeting called the Missouri Synod "a naked, polluted, bloody, cast-off foundling" . . . when a brother in answer to a plea for love and understanding quoted St. Paul, "Let him be accursed." He was talking about other brethren . . . when passages of Scripture were frighteningly misquoted . . . when the entire convention failed to realize that our problem was not one of theology and doctrine but purely of attitude and that our difficulties lie in the field of moral theology . . . the Luther of Zwingli and Marburg, "Ihr habt einen andern Geist" would today be behind Microphone Thirteen hollering for the floor.

* * *

Salute Section again: In conventions like this great moments come suddenly and unexpectedly. One of these came when a parish pastor—Gaertner of Dallas—defended the recommendation to turn over certain problems and duties, also of relations with separated brethren, to our younger churches throughout the world. His clear and eloquent explanation was a turning point. Once more we heard a voice with the authentic, prophetic ring; and the distant divine drums began to roll and there was a sound of marching feet toward 2000 A. D. . . .

A few words to the good brother who asked again and again: Why must we "study" all these questions? Answer: Because this is the on-going, continuing, imperative task of the Waiting Church. This is its glory and mission—to study God—to listen thoughtfully to the Holy Ghost—to dig deep into the Word. This staggering task is not dependent on synodical resolutions. We can never really say: "Be it resolved that we now will study the principles of interpretation." This can become almost blasphemous. God Himself has commanded that, and for anybody—even a synodical convention—to say "We are inclined to agree with God" is the ultimate arrogance.

Again and again a brother would express the fear that heresy was being taught in our synodical classrooms. Somebody at the press table figured out quickly that about 85,000 classes a week are conducted in our colleges and seminaries. Are we sure that there is no heresy, wrong ideas, bad conclu-
isions in all these 85,000 hours? Let us be honest and humble. Only the powerful working of the Holy Spirit can prevent that—or when it has happened—can make it good again.

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You may vaguely remember that in the last issue of these yellow sheets I promised a long epistle on Detroit from Theophilus. He ducked the assignment and turned it over to Theodotus—a brother whom I do not know.

Dear O. P.:

You asked for my reactions to Synod’s convention at Detroit in June. Since at the last minute it turned out that I could not stay for the whole ten days, I asked my trusted friend Theodotus to report. You’ll note that he shares my viewpoint but he is more clerical and more literary. Whenever he’s on shaky ground he’ll quote somebody or other to make the argument look stronger. Watch him. Thus writes Theodotus:

“As I entered Cobo auditorium I checked my guitar—the convention promised to be hard on guitar players—and ducked my Valpo Alumni Card (the wife is the alumna; I pay the dues) behind my draft card in my billfold. By the way, I pulled it out and put in my I.D. badge before the convention was over. What did you do, bribe the delegates or scowl at them from that table up front? In any case, for all the pre-convention noise, on-the-floor opposition to Valpo lasted about as long as Sonny Liston does on his one night stands.

“Looking back, I would not call Detroit a ‘turning point’ (to coin a phrase) but Synod did walk down the road into which it turned at Cleveland three years ago. The mission resolutions we passed are honeys—I think of them as ‘spiritual time-bombs’ and plan to use them in my Bible Classes. Picture using synodical resolutions in Bible classes! I am glad we are going to participate in LCUSA. I nearly fainted when we voted so strongly for the common Lutheran hymnal. They tell me it can not be finished until 1980. The way some of the men talked you’d think we were talking about 1984! I’m not even sore that we decided to go for that $40 million. It might hit a few of my two-boat families a little hard, though.

“Frankly, I think those who read about Detroit will have a better spirit than those who were there. To paraphrase T. S. Eliot (I quote people when I’m on shaky ground): we seemed often ‘to do the right thing in the wrong spirit.’ In the interests of democracy we let men sound off in a negative spirit and they set the tone so that the tolerant and independent majority (about five-sixths of my floor-mates with red badges) has to walk away with sour memories and a certain joylessness. Well, the brethren were tolerant of the soreheads, but they took care of them most of the time when the votes were counted.

“I divided the negative ones into three groups. Patron saints for the thoughtless ones is Cardinal Spellman, who protested change at the Vatican Council with the words ‘This doesn’t sound exactly like what we were taught at seminary.’ (Do you think your and my old pros at seminary would like to hear that they were infallible?) Type two are the nervous ones. I have a quotation for them, as they move in a world where the Gospel is surrounded and attacked. It’s from Henry Sidgwick: ‘The denial by another of what I hold true, impairs my confidence in it.’ And for the bitter-enders, fresh from their pre-Synod conferences (I call them the ‘crabby ones’) I lean to the oft-quoted line of Erich Heller: Their ‘strict orthodoxy is as much the result of mutual suspicion as of ardent faith.

“Oh, but there were high spots. My heart was full as I heard former Veep Nitz extol Valpo in words which 5000 other pastors could have used. I am glad that the brethren are beginning to look at the Valpo grads in their flocks and are judging Valpo by its fruits. Now I hope they do that with the St. Louis seminary, which seemed to me to be victimized throughout the days of Detroit. I haven’t figured this out. Time and again men would get up and extol the vicars and recent grads of that sem. ‘By their fruits ye shall know them?’ How can such an evil tree bear such good fruit? I hope you can put in a good word for our alma mater. Let’s let Prexy Fibby get up once and tell us about the good things happening at 801 DeMun!

“Another high spot: When a District President, after scores of people had told how much we had to teach other Lutherans and how much we had to witness and set them straight, got up to the mike and said—can these notes be accurate?—that we might also have something to learn, that we might do well also to listen? Hooray.

“Say, the men were really het up about that Detroit newspaper which said we gave Pete Seeger a ‘standing ovation’ just because we had to stand up to count the votes about him. At least they could see from this that the press does not always get everything correct. I note that many attacks on men in Synod are based on press reports of this type, as if the press were inerrant and infallible.

“Sorry I didn’t get to talk to you at Detroit. I always saw you on the down escalators as I shot up the up ones. Well, old pilgrim, you always did complain that the trumpets were sounding for you on the other side. Only I couldn’t get your attention. I didn’t have my trumpet. As I mentioned, I even had to hide my guitar!
"Time now to get busy on my hermeneutics. We heard so much about 'the old hermeneutics' and 'the new hermeneutics.' I hope to provide you and Theophilus with my own opus, The Middle-Aged Hermeneutics. Count on me to be wishy-washy!

"But, in the love of Christ, I am cordially yours,

Theodotus"

See what I mean about all those quotations and references?

Theophilus

Theophilus picks books: I'm proud to say that CPH is showing still more inventiveness with "The Christian Encounter" series, and for autumn reading I hope people will poke around in William Miller's little paperback in that series, the one about pop music and jazz.

And for the little ones in the back seat, get some Concordia Arch books. 35¢ each.

My other selections will cost a bit more. Start with Oxford's beautiful, beautiful edition of Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine edited by Clyde L. Manschreck. It's a translation of the 1555 Loc. And we all know what loci are. My second hardbound choice is Dietrich Bonhoeffer's No Rusty Swords, from Harper and Row. It's a translation of selections from his Gesammelte Schriften. Finally, there's Donald Meyer's The Positive Thinkers (Doubleday), a history of the sub-Christian health-wealth-power cults from Mary Baker Eddy to Norman Vincent Peale. Since some Realism creeps, like error, into our ranks from time to time, this is an excellent purgative.

Theophilus

Comes a note from one of our distinguished alumni, Dr. George J. Beto, former president of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, now Director of the Texas Department of Corrections. His report is interesting from every point of view. If you are at all interested in this part of our society, you might wish to write George a brief note. I was especially intrigued by the brief history of the Texas Prison System: "The most notorious man in Texas prison history was John Wesley Hardin, reputed to have killed twenty men. The first woman convict was Elizabeth Huffman, convicted in 1854 of infanticide. The most unusual occupation listed by an inmate was 'Gentleman Loafer.' The most unusual sentence was for 'worthlessness.' The shortest sentence on record was given to William Saunders for one hour in 1870. The youngest convict was a nine year old boy sentenced in 1887 for robbery. Two famous Indian chiefs Santanta and Big Tree were imprisoned in the 1870's for inciting a massacre." Apparently our friend George has a good and interesting job.

Another "little girl" paragraph: Many years ago I remember boarding the train out of Chicago one morning to head for a synodical convention. Just as we were seated in the car the venerable president of Synod, Dr. Frederick Pfotenhauer, came down the aisle. He looked us over and finally said: "Es wirt in der Synode zu viel gereist." Translation: "There is too much traveling in Synod." He should really see us now! At the drop of a postcard from Timbuctoo two executives dash for the airport and hop the next jet. I myself head for Seattle as casually as I used to drive my green Chevy to Chicago. One may legitimately ask as did Dr. Pfotenhauer: "Is this trip really necessary or would a letter do?" It is, of course, one real reflection of the fact that our world has become a neighborhood and the miles have been squeezed into inches. An overnight trip to Iceland gets me away from telephones, certain non-synodical newspapers and my financial problems. So we are now a generation of post-modern Cains, "vagabonds in the earth." One can only hope that the Gospel moves as fast as we do.

Notes on a Frayed Cuff: A special blessing on the brethren who send me stories from here and there. Their humor is excellent. Samples:

There was the young preacher who was equally influenced by Tillich and Billy Graham. He closed each service with the benediction: "The Ground of our Being bless you real good."

A good brother in California comes through with this: They have out there now, in the wonderful town of San Francisco, an atheist dial-a-prayer telephone—you dial the number and nobody answers.

Another one:

Here is advice to young co-eds or other young women: Marry an archeologist. The older you become the more interested in you he will become.

A note from a brother in Northern Illinois, sending me clippings concerning the new archbishop of the archdiocese of Chicago:

Embracing 2.3 million members in Cook and Lake counties, Chicago is the largest archdiocese in the United States and one of the largest in the world. Statistics tell this story: 460 parishes, 434 elementary schools, 90 high schools, 14 seminaries, 6 colleges and universities, 22 general hospitals, 49 cemeteries, 33 orphanages and infant homes, 9700 nuns, 2909 priests and nearly 700 brothers. It is very big business in the billion dollar class.
To which the brother adds: "And add an assortment of the worst gangsters in the world."

The new archbishop, by the way, Archbishop Cody of New Orleans, appears to be a fine, genial, Christian gentleman, with a great deal of administrative ability.

** Additional Notes on a Frayed Cuff: **My faithful reading of the Detroit Lutheran usually pays off. The editorials are good: the news coverage seems to be complete; and they often come up with an idea. This time it is the story of Trinity Church in Utica surprising their pastor with a "Special Evening of Recognition." Voice from the rear: "What's so noteworthy about that?" Answer: The pastor, the Rev. W. Bieenthal, was not celebrating any anniversary, was not retiring, and was not moving away. He wasn't even dead. The congregation was simply expressing its gratitude for faithful service—no more than that—and no less. Bless their hearts! This is a new and rare thing in synodical history, and it is much better than standing around a pastor's grave and saying what a wonderful person he was. It is a little difficult for him to hear us then.

What in the world is more lonely than a negro's grave in a forgotten churchyard in south Georgia? John Critten was his name, and he is covered softly now by the weeds he pulled from cotton patches all his life. The crude lettering on the red stone slab reads simply:

John Critten
1880-1933

But then there is a gesture of ultimate defiance at the life he had lived and the world he had seen. Beneath the dates of his birth and death there is a reference to Revelation 3:21. I can see his dying smile even now.

** The following from a brother in Indiana:**

This note is from the London Times of Monday, July 26, 1965:

"Theophilus—died 23 July 1965 at Battle Hospital, Reading, Canon Geh. Theophilus M. A., age 96, beloved husband of Mary of Hamilton Cottage, Strickley. Burke's funeral service Strickley Church on Wednesday, July 28, 11:00 a.m. Please no flowers."

This frankly disturbed me, and the next time Theophilus came into the office I touched him on the arm to be sure that he was still flesh and blood.

Note on a postcard from a brother in New York: "Busy man, you have had a little day."

** Notes for your next sermon on world affairs and the relationship of the Church to them:** The population of the world is increasing by 7000 an hour—90% of all scientists that ever lived are alive today—knowledge is doubling at the rate of once every 15 years—out of every ten men and women who change their religion in Africa seven become Mohammedans.

** Yesterday, an otherwise nice day, Theophilus stormed into the office. **I took one look at him and saw he was in one of his superior moods. "Look," he said, "I have been reading some good books lately and I would like to recommend them to the boys."

"Theophilus," I said, "I tried that a year or two back, and the response was like dropping a rose petal into the Grand Canyon. No soap."

He was not impressed: "There may have been good reasons for the thundering silence. Maybe the brethren already had enough to read—or they had been going through Martin Luther's I Was A Teen-age Catholic with their Juniors—or they just don't trust your judgment in books—or anything else. If you would print the names of books recommended by Theophilus, the response would be terrific. After all, you represent nobody but yourself; I, on the other hand, am the voice of 5000 preachers. I know what they want and need."

I hesitated, and Theophilus went on: "Let's try it. It might be a welcome relief from your worm's eye view of everything."

I gave in. "Next month," I said, "will be Theophilus Book Month. But," I added, "none of your funny stuff. I know that you are one of the disreputable characters who invented that fake German theologian at the seminary some years ago."

** Dictionary of Obsolescence:** This is the name of a new department in these yellow sheets. In it I hope to present a growing list of words which had relevance many years ago but have not been parodied, parroted and carelessly bandied about so that they are headed for the ash-heap of the obsolete.

For a while I thought the title of this section might be: "Words that have Crossed the Tracks." It is clear that words have a life all their own, especially if they are being forged in the furnaces of history.
They are born, live, and die in a fascinating cycle which is close to the story of life itself. Used by men, they reflect the intellectual and theological age of the user. Only a few months ago I heard a speech on "Theology and Science" which clearly revealed the fact that the speaker was either adolescent or senile—the two shadowy and irrelevant ages of life.

So, the first tentative list of obsolescent words:

1. **Dialogue**: Originally a good word to describe the new desire of all branches of Christendom to talk to one another. Now used too often to designate a theological garrotes—too much talk and not enough hard thought. Suggested substitute: An English equivalent for the German: "Begegnung."

2. **Conservative-Liberal**: Brought to the ash-heap by moving entirely into the foggy realm of emotion.

3. **Unionism-separatism**. See preceding note, only worse.

Contributions to this section are welcome. Please note well that this is not an evasive dismissal of the realities behind these words. I just want new words that will shock us out of the shallows of no-think.

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**Final note**: These early fall days I have thought in idle moments of the fact that in 1967 we will commemorate the 450th anniversary of the Reformation. This date is of no particular significance in itself, except that for many of us it will be the last one we shall be able to celebrate before the 500th when our children will have taken over. *If there is anything that I could wish for Christendom between now and 1967 (and thereafter) I would suggest that we study hard, as never before, the full implications of the theology of the Cross and the theology of the Church.* Our problem today, of course, is relevance. When we preach and teach theology of the Cross are we really speaking to men in their present condition? Are we making the greatest possible contribution to the troubled life and thought of our century? Answer: Yes! The theology of the Cross liberates men, gives them the assurance of power, and has furnished basic ideas which the world has not fully digested in 400 years. The old paradox is still true: What seems to be most irrelevant to the secular, unbelieving mind is most relevant to the mind of God and to the following mind of the believer. The French historian E. Doumergue said it very clearly: "It is the theology of salvation by Another than man which has saved human morality; it is the theology of renunciation of the world which has saved man's mastery over the world; it is the theology of man's renunciation of himself that has saved human personality; it is the theology that preached the love of God which has saved love toward all men; it is the theology of heteronomy which has conferred on man an autonomy so fully master-of-itself to be master of all else; it is the theology that said 'God is all, man is nothing' which has made of man a force, an energy, a power which is unconquerable." To which we might add: It is the theology of the Cross, of suffering, of death, which has given man the hope of the crown of righteousness, of life, full, free abundant and brave, a life that the 20th century needs as it needs nothing else.

The doctrine of the Church: Now as never before it will be necessary for us to look again at the great wounds in the body of Christ, the torn cloth of his garment, and the unremembered pathos of his prayer: "I pray that they may all be one, even as I and the Father are one," the prayer in which he asks for the greatest miracle and mystery in all of history—the drawing down into time of the mysterious union of the Holy Trinity. He prayed that we, the dust of the earth, might be one even as He and the Father are one. This is the ultimate vision of the Church. The most astonishing phenomenon of our time is our forgetfulness of this basic truth. Even the Vatican Council has trouble with the Schema, "De Ecclesia." Not even our Roman Catholic brethren are sure of the nature and function of the Church. And here as nowhere else the corrosive nature of our post modern secularism is most clearly evident.

So—if you can add a little to your study time during the next two years, I would recommend that you would devote it to these two great fundamental doctrines.

And now I am off to the hospital. Some of my friends want to do some repair work on this mortal coil.

Sincerely yours,

O. P. Kretzmann