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Dear Brother:

This one is really hard to figure out. I mean the 47th regular (were there some irregular ones?) convention of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. Undeniably there were some high moments; there were some equally evident low, very low, happenings. I have read all that has been printed since July and have interviewed about fifty brethren, tried and true. They differ widely on what actually happened. The optimists and the pessimists are sharply divided. At times they even read the same resolution in diametrically opposite ways.

This confusion of tongues must underscore the fact, more than ever before, that these yellow sheets are a worm's eye view of the convention written by only one worm. After all, a worm is a worm is a worm. A worm, you may remember from your elementary Biology, sees everything from below, feels more than he sees, and does not hear at all. And, of course, he cannot think. All his reactions are instinctive. As a result he is often completely oblivious of the ambiguity and ambivalence of life also in the church. Only with these restrictions in mind should you read the report of one worm's ten days in New York. The only comparable thing I can imagine would be Theophilus' story of Vatican Council II.

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Let us begin with the lighter side: It should be said again that Synod in convention assembled has not lost its sardonic sense of humor. The president himself led in these expressions of the temporality and incongruity of some of the things we were doing. In answer to the plaintive inquiry of a delegate concerning the meaning of a resolution, he said: "It simply means that we will do this until we decide to do something else." At another point he noted the excellent attendance at the sessions until the very end of the convention. He suggested "that we give each other a hand." The delegates responded with great enthusiasm.

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Semantic item: During the course of the convention it became clear that Synod is developing its own vocabulary and that one cannot follow a discussion without being sure of the new meaning of certain words. For example, the word "concern" was used more than any other word in the dictionary. When a brother said: "Mr. President, I am concerned," he really meant: "I am mad." When he said: "I am deeply concerned," he meant: "I am mad as Hades." I had been watching Theophilus and I noted that he continued reading his newspaper when the word came over the mike. He broke that custom only once. A brother rose to say: "Mr. President, I have been deeply concerned for more than fifty years." Theophilus put his paper down. When I asked him about it, he said: "Look, any guy who has been mad for fifty years should have a hearing." Perhaps I should add that even our venerable president joined in these semantic exercises: "I am concerned that the Synod's time be used to best advantage." Translated this meant: "If Brother Schnattergans opens his mouth once more, I will turn off his mike."

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Gratitude item: A bow, deep and low, to the local committee. The Atlantic District boys know how to handle things with grace and dispatch. They really made only one major mistake for the entire ten days, and it was a good one. They vastly underestimated the crowd at the opening service at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. There were 7000 people there, 3000 more than expected. Beyond this miscalculation their handling of the thousand details involved in such a gathering was exceedingly intelligent and orderly.

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Mathematical item: To be remembered! There were 833 delegates. At times thirty of them would stand up behind the mikes and holler about something. Everybody is impressed by this show of power. Five minutes later the 800 who sat silent suddenly vote against this minuscule minority behind the microphones, and the matter is dead — at least for
another two years. By the way, I liked the delegate who repeatedly stood up behind Micro-
phone No. 11 and shouted: "Please don't discriminate against this microphone." Another
was the brother who said: "I move that this be postponed indefinitely — that means to kill
it." The chairman promptly replied: "Don't give any exegesis of your motion, please."

Another one: Delegate: "I would like to move." Chairman: "Would you just like to, or
do you?"

Salute: Hoffmann's essay should be read and studied for a long time. Its great strength
lay in his sharp definition of words often sadly misunderstood: church, holiness, saints,
grace, obedience, forgiveness, penitence. His remarks on these were like a flashing light
in the dark post-modern night.

Larger moment: On Wednesday morning the delegates sat up straight and alert when
the chairman announced the third appearance of Committee Three on Church Relations.
The Committee was bringing in its recommendations on altar and pulpit fellowship with
the American Lutheran Church.

In three minutes and forty-two seconds flat the hawks and the doves were at the eleven
microphones. The president in a tone of sanctified resignation announced that twenty-seven
delegates had asked for the floor. The convention laughed sympathetically when he asked
in answer to a voice from Mars: "Is there any speaking on this question?"

The galleries were now filled, the soldiers of the Cross were lined up behind the micro-
phones, and the brethren drew a deep breath. The mikes were opened, and the flood of
words and more words began. There were some beautiful moments. At one point a dele-
gate suggested: "Let's wait with this until the end of time." The chairman responded:
"You have just reached the end of your time." (A two minute rule — not found in the
New Testament — was in force.) At another point a delegate said: "I would like to call
on an English professor for a definition of this word." The chairman: "Let's not incite
other speakers who had not thought of speaking."

But gradually the issues became clear. May a worm's eye observer say that there was
really little evidence of serious doctrinal disagreement: Missouri has been well-trained.

One thing, however, became dismayingly clear. Too many of us have become tragically
and ultimately afraid. Fear or the conquest of fear was the dividing line. Some brethren
were afraid — and their fears ranged far and wide and deep — of the ALC, the LCA,
Synodical officers, the Government, the Commission on Theology, the future, all forms of
unity, youth, the unknown, the new, and many other strange things. There were other
brethren who seemed to fear God only. This, of course, is really the only fear that is
Christian. All other fears are sub-Christian — they take something away from the power
and glory of Jesus Christ. Ecclesiastically and historically fear is the mark of an un-
Lutheran fundamentalism.

Well — at 10:17 the convention by an eloquent vote adopted a fine resolution proposed
by Chairman Rakow of Committee No. 3.

Voice from the rear: "What really happened in this matter? In your own simple words
tell us, if you can." My tentative, hesitant and worm's eye reply: Synod decided not to go
backward and not to stand still in the imperative march toward Lutheran unity, but to
move ahead slowly and massively on the way which the deathless dynamic of the Holy
Spirit had clearly outlined. The world, the Church and heaven in different ways point to
the need for our listening to the unitive forces which are both timely and timeless.

Moral: Let us bring the Holy Spirit back into our Convention.

A quick exchange item: The chairman always insisted that every delegate who approached
a mike had to identify himself. At one point in the discussion a familiar voice came from
the dark regions around Microphone No. 11 and began to speak. The chairman asked for
his name. The voice answered: "I am Fuerbringer, St. Louis." Chairman: "I am glad to
know you." Fuerbringer: "I thought you would be."

At another point Vice President Wiederaenders addressed the visitors in the balcony:
"Do not place your Convention Workbook on the balcony railing. If it should fall on a dele-
gate below, the weight of the resolutions might be disastrous." The convention looked up-
ward in dismay.

Deploring the low salaries of professors and comparing them with pastors who receive
other emoluments a delegate from the Eastern District pointed out that: "If a bulb in the
parsonage burns out, the congregation replaces it." There was a murmur of disbelief
around the hall. I could only note that Sauerbraten is not a member of this congregation.
Beside me Theophilus muttered: "The last time a bulb burned out in my house Sauerbraten
sent over an old kerosene lamp."
Item—I-Don’t-Like-To-Report: One stormy night with thunder and lightning over Manhattan I drifted into a room where the Committee on Theological Matters was conducting an open hearing. The room was crowded, and the air was tense with suspicion and fear. A frustrated brother in the rear complained that he was not being recognized because the chairman of the committee had no eye for him. Another brother proclaimed that he loved everyone in the Synod except — the list grew so long that I went out for a smoke. When I returned, a nice lady was delivering a well-prepared speech which was so constructed that every second sentence ended in a lady-like shriek. When the "open hearing" ended, I took a walk in the clean air of Babylon.

Pious Speeches: I imagine that about 99 percent of the delegates share my misgivings about so-called "pious speeches". Strangely enough they are a disturbing note and usually quite thoroughly irrelevant in any discussion. What really happens, of course, is that Brother Gernegross delivered a sermon on Mother’s Day which was widely acclaimed by the 97 people present — so much so that he felt some of the more eloquent passages should be repeated for a larger audience. He therefore memorized them and came to the convention waiting for the moment when he might be delivered. This, I believe, accounts for about 95 percent of all "pious speeches".

Seating Arrangements: As has been customary for more than a century, the brethren with the red badges (voting) sat in the seats of honor facing the rostrum and the guys with the blue badges (advisory) sat to the right and to the left, half-turned away from the center of activities. When the blue brethren spoke, the words of their oratory swept over the heads of the reds who sat in the seats of power. The blue-badge boys, therefore, represented the cross-currents — a symbolic situation fraught with profound meaning. One blue-badge guy, by the way, said that he would like to make a motion, could not, but also added immediately: "Behind me is a delegate who will make what I say into a motion."

In these notes there have been several references to the dignity and dispatch with which the chairman of the convention handled his chores. Let it be said here and now that President O. R. Harms, always a good chairman, came through the long days a superb one. He was in full control in always such a gracious, even humorous, manner that again and again he cut down voluble brethren so kindly that they never knew where the knife had come from.

Have you been waiting for the letter from Theophilus? I must admit that except for a few choleric outbursts due to his eating enchiladas for breakfast Theophilus was strangely silent during the convention. I saw him only occasionally. Nor did the usual letter land on my desk when I got home.

Only yesterday his epistle arrived. I read it avidly — and then sat back in deep meditation. Theophilus seems to be sadder than I have ever seen him. He seemed to have seen things which I did not see, but he is a smart cookie and I, for one, am willing to listen. Theophilus speaks:

Dear O.P.,

My brief moment at the Summit is behind me. I dutifully wore the red badge of a voting delegate at the convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in New York. Do you know what they call New York City these days? Fun City! It was no fun for me. I had no time to enjoy it. I never realized how hard delegates have to work at these conventions — from early morning to late at night! Those endless committee meetings and open hearings! And all that sitting! I’ve got a few new callouses in the strangest places.

I promised to share my reactions to the convention with you. I hope you won’t regret asking me for them. You know how I usually try to see the positive side of things. I came away from the New York convention with an awfully negative feeling. At first I thought it was because I was tired. But the feeling is still with me.

I’m really very disappointed in what happened in New York. We spent a lot of time and money adopting a book full of resolutions and accomplishing precious little. I suppose you’ll tell me that I need to attend more conventions to realize that’s how conventions are and that little by little the church does make progress through them. That may be so, but there was something about the spirit and mood at New York that struck me as foreboding and filled me with a depression that reached right through to my very bones.

I don’t have time to give you all my reactions. You can’t be away from the parish for a couple of weeks without a heavy backlog of problems waiting for you. Let me share at least a few of my thoughts with you to explain my disappointment.
Most of the resolutions on theological matters really got under my skin. We reaffirmed so many doctrines I lost count. I felt like an utter fool voting to reaffirm that the Bible is our source and norm of faith and that the Lutheran Confessions are a correct exposition of Bible teaching. Everybody knows that’s our synod’s doctrinal basis! I thought it ridiculous to take convention time to reaffirm Bible teachings on Christ’s propitiatory atonement and His resurrection from the dead. You’ll hear that message from each pulpit in the synod every Sunday of the year! What kind of cancer is eating at the souls of so many of our brethren that they constantly have to be reassured convention after convention about our synod’s theological orthodoxy?

I was embarrassed by the level of theological understanding exhibited in the discussion of the resolutions on theological matters. I waited in vain for synod’s theologians to speak. Why didn’t they? Is it possible that the heresy hunters and the theological nitpickers among us have forced the theologians underground? Maybe they figure it’s not worth all the trouble they get into when they say what’s on their mind. I know some of them weren’t happy with the phraseology of some of the theological resolutions. I could see it on their faces. But they didn’t speak out. That bothers me and makes me concerned about our synod’s future.

The resolution dealing with the first chapters of Genesis was a beaut. Can you imagine? We reaffirmed that the Bible teaches that God made the world in six days! Do we need a convention resolution to tell us what is in Genesis 1? In the course of the discussion we were told that the resolution allows room for varying exegetical interpretations of the Scripture passages cited in it. And then we went round and round on the difference between an exegetical interpretation and a dogmatic formulation. One lay brother couldn’t understand the distinction. I don’t think the explanations he got helped him very much. By the time we got around to voting on the resolution, I doubt if anybody knew for sure what he was voting for.

The theological debate on the floor of the convention brought home forcefully to me the futility of trying to draft meaningful doctrinal statements at a convention and the foolishness of assuming that convention statements on theological matters are going to have any great influence on the life of the church. What do we need these convention statements for anyway? We’ve all pledged ourselves to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. That really ought to be enough — for Lutherans, at least.

About midway in the convention a brother gave me a copy of a resolution that was NOT before the convention. I tried to get the Committee on Theological Matters to sponsor it, but they wanted no part of it. If it had gotten on the convention floor, I’m sure it would have passed. Here it is:

WHEREAS, The Scripture teaches, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'"; and
WHEREAS, We are no fools; therefore be it
RESOLVED, That we reaffirm that God exists; and be it further
RESOLVED, That we commend God for having helped us put teeth into this resolution.

Of course, the big deal at the convention was what to do about pulpit and altar fellowship with The American Lutheran Church. Everybody had something to say on that subject. At one point there were 50 speakers at the microphones. I know you’ll find it hard to believe, O. P., but I spoke only once on the floor — and that was to move the previous question when debate on an amendment threatened to go on forever.

I suppose the action that was taken on the ALC fellowship question was about what was to be expected. Now we’re to have grass roots discussions in preparation for a decision at the 1969 convention. Goodness knows we need those grass roots discussions. I couldn’t believe my ears. I met any number of fellow pastors who literally do not know the ALC pastor in their community. Those were the ones who were usually the most judgmental about the ALC.

I’m no ecumaniac, O. P. But I do know the ALC pastor in my town, and the LCA fellow, too — and the Episcopalian rector — and the Roman Catholic priest. What’s more, I count them my friends and treasure them as fellow Christians. I simply can’t comprehend the negative, separatist, isolationist attitude voiced by so many at the convention. Why, we spent at least an hour debating whether we could engage with other Lutherans in events arranged to give a united witness to the significance of the Reformation in this 450th anniversary year!

There was one resolution dealing with other Lutherans that really has me upset. It instructs pastors and congregations of the synod not to commune Lutherans who belong to church bodies not in fellowship with us except in situations of emergency and in special cases of pastoral care. I intend to ignore that resolution, O. P. It’s not Lutheran! Do you realize what it does? It makes membership in an organization the criterion for admission to the Sacrament. As far as I am concerned, faith is the only criterion. I don’t intend to close the Lord’s table to anyone He has invited to be there — convention or no convention.
Let me share one more reason why I felt so down after the events in New York. Maybe you won't believe it, as I didn't at first. Friends whose knowhow I respect told me that a political action group was functioning on the convention floor, determined to steer the elections and to dominate convention action on key issues for the purpose of "stopping the synod from getting more liberal than it already is." O. P., that's against our tradition in the Missouri Synod, and so I told my friends they had to be mistaken. They asked me to keep my eyes open and see for myself. You know what? I saw enough evidence to make me wonder if the allegations aren't true? There had to be some kind of block voting for the elections to come out as they did in a number of instances. There did seem to be some kind of organization to the way the speechmaking developed on a few key issues. I myself saw the supposed leaders of the action group in quite a few huddles during and after convention sessions.

Actually, I don't see anything wrong in the procedure if we all agree to change the ground rules for our conventions. I'm opposed to having only one political party functioning in the synod — especially the one that's supposed to be functioning. It's too negative in spirit, narrow in theological outlook, and separatist in its conception of the synod for my taste. I don't want that kind of group determining the course of my synod. It can happen, you know. It's possible for a small, well-organized, and highly disciplined group to gain control of an organization.

Maybe it's time to organize another action group in the synod — one that operates in the open and clearly spells out its platform for the future of the synod. If there is going to be political maneuvering, let's have it out in the open. Do you know anyone who might want to organize a positive, progressive, forward looking action group? I might be willing to join. That's how bothered I am by what happened in New York.

There were good happenings at the New York convention; and a few great ones. I haven't allowed the depressed spirit within me to forget them or overlook them. I rejoiced again and again when I witnessed the power of the Spirit at work in a Christian brother, when I heard how the joyful message of the good news is being proclaimed in many parts of the world, when I saw the concern of so many to do much more than we are now doing to speak God's Word to the world and to act for men in love. Maybe I'll tell you about the good side of the convention some other time.

I was ever so glad to get back to my parish, and the people in my congregation welcomed me back with hearts of love. In the warmth of that spiritual family I thought about our synodical leaders, especially President Harms, and the difficult task he has steering the synodical ship through strife-tossed waters and under dark financial clouds. "Justified by Grace" was the convention motto. As I reflect on my responsibilities and my problems, I realize that God's grace is big enough to forgive my pastoral ineptitude, my theological shallowness, and my lack of love. I thank God that the synod, too, stands under His grace — AND THE NEW YORK CONVENTION.

Faithfully yours under His grace,
Theophilus

* * *

So far Theophilus. Late at night I wonder how many brethren agree with him. Meanwhile, I have told him to read all the schemata of the Council of Trent. That ought to cheer his soul.

Two days later another note came from my sad friend.

"Dear O. P.:

I saw you sitting among the delegates at Synod's convention, taking notes at all the wrong times, so I know we will be getting a report in your yellow pages on the business meetings. Since you were so busy writing and trying not to look perplexed by what you were hearing, you probably never got out of the hotel. For that reason, I thought you might want to know what New York is like, and, believe me, I can tell you.

This was the first time anybody in our family had been in New York since my grandfather spent the night at Ellis Island on his way from Germany to North Dakota. (My grandfather was late for everything and even missed the boat bound for Perry County.) If I have my way, I'll be the last one to have visited New York, too.

When I got back home, I was in poor shape. My feet hurt and my ulcer was kicking up. The prices in New York restaurants were to blame for both. The first day I got to the hotel, I took one look at the prices on the menu and I knew right then I was going to starve to death if I had to eat there on what my District was furnishing in the way of expenses.

I spent a half day walking around looking at the prices on the menus posted in restaurant windows until I found one place I could afford. The trouble was it was a Mexican restaurant and it was way over on 10th Avenue. But the price was right. So for every meal I hiked over there, which accounts for the sore feet. As for the ulcer acting up, have you ever tried eating an enchilada for breakfast?

Faithfully yours under His grace,
Theophilus

* * *
On the way over and back three times a day, I got a good look at those New Yorkers. Did you ever see such short skirts in your life? At first I thought these people were too poor to afford decent clothes but then somebody told me these were mini skirts and the thing to wear nowadays. I can tell you they're not the thing to wear where I come from.

I don't claim to be an authority on women's knees, but I couldn't help noticing them with skirts that short. Maybe I'm still not an authority on the subject, but I don't mind saying that a woman's knee, from my way of thinking, is about the most unattractive thing about her. Knees are knobby and I can't figure why a woman would want to expose something that funny looking. And the only thing worse than the front of a knee is the back of one with those two tendons sticking out. Maybe those short skirts look all right on the younger girls, but most of the women I saw wearing them ran to age and weight with more than their share of varicose veins.

The other thing I didn't like is that New Yorkers aren't friendly. When I was on the street I always wore my badge and I had a cheery greeting for everyone I met, but I never got more than a surprised grunt in return. Oh, there was one exception. One night I was walking on 53rd street in front of the hotel and two nicely dressed young ladies greeted me. They even started up a conversation but we didn't seem to be getting through to each other, and I lost interest when I found out neither one of them came from North Dakota.

There's a lot more I could tell you, including how I always got on the wrong elevator in the hotel, but I don't want to take up any more space because I know you are going to want to fill up those pages with your unofficial minutes of the convention.

Yours,

Theophilus

Comment: Theophilus is a strange, ambivalent guy. Let it go at that!

* * *

Two days and one night after I had returned from New York, Theophilus appeared at the door with a fishing rod. Before he could say, "I'm going fishing," I said: "Theophilus, almost all the brethren who were not present in New York decided to fill in the time by expressing their indignation, approval, disapproval, agreement or anger over the last issue of these yellow sheets. Since you have nothing to do the next few days (you know you never catch anything) I want you to answer the comments of the brethren. And be careful — there are certain laws governing stuff sent through the U.S. mails."

Three days later the following letter landed on my desk:

Dear O. P.:

Well, I've had it. I've been trying all these years to fulfill my calling as a plain, unadjectived Missouri Synod preacher, operating with the Word and the Confessions where they spoke clearly and flying by the seat of my pants where they didn't. But since New York it appears that we're all going to have to choose sides — liberal, conservative, or mugwump. So I have been thumbing through the dictionary to see where I fit.

I have concluded that I want to be a liberal. I have arrived at this conclusion after consulting WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY (Fifth Edition, 1943) and the Holy Scriptures (Phillips Translation, 1964 and 1965). Here beginneth Webster's definition of "liberal" with appropriate citations from the New Testament:

"BEFITTING A MAN OF FREE BIRTH" (cf. Galatians 4: "So then, my brothers, we are not to look upon ourselves as the sons of the slave woman but of the free, not sons of slavery under the Law but sons of freedom under grace.")

"NOT RESTRICTED" (Cf. Galatians 5: "Plant your feet firmly therefore within the freedom that Christ has won for us, and do not let yourselves be caught again in the shackles of slavery.")

"BESTOWING IN A LARGE AND NOBLE WAY, GENEROUS, BOUNTEOUS, OPENHANDED" (Cf. Romans 12: "Let us have no imitation Christian love . . . . Let us have a real warm affection for one another as between brothers, and a willingness to let the other man have the credit . . . . Let us . . . do our work for God . . . . Give freely to fellow-Christians in want, never grudging a meal or a bed to those who need them. And as for those who try to make your life a misery, bless them. Don't curse, bless. Share the happiness of those who are happy, and the sorrow of those who are sad.")

"FREE FROM RESTRAINT; UNCHECKED; LICENTIOUS" Webster notes that this usage is archaic. Some of our brethren must be using a pre-1943 dictionary.

"NOT CONFINED OR RESTRICTED TO THE LITERAL SENSE" (Cf. the Sermon on the Mount, our Lords' frequent use of the apposition, 'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . . But I say unto you.' Cf. also Paul's remarkable exegesis of the Old Testament command about not muzzling the ox that treadeth out the corn in I Timothy 5.)

"NOT NARROW OR CONTRACTED IN MIND; BROAD-MINDED" (Cf. James 3: "The wis-
dom that comes from God is first utterly pure, then peace-loving, gentle, approachable, full of tolerant thoughts and kindly actions, with no breath of favoritism or hint of hypocrisy. And the wise are peace-makers who go on quietly sowing for a harvest of righteousness — in other people and in themselves.

"NOT BOUND BY ORTHODOX TENETS OR ESTABLISHED FORMS IN POLITICAL OR RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY; INDEPENDENT IN OPINION; NOT CONSERVATIVE; OFTEN; SPECIF., HAVING TENDENCY TOWARD DEMOCRATIC OR REPUBLICAN, AS DISTINGUISHED FROM MONARCHICAL OR ARISTOCRATIC, FORMS" (Cf. I Thessalonians 5: "By all means use your judgment, and hold on to whatever is really good"; also Colossians 2: "Be careful that nobody spoils your faith through intellectualism or high-sounding nonsense. Such stuff is at best founded on men's ideas of the nature of the world and disregards Christ!"; also I Peter 5: "Now may I who am myself an elder say a word to you fellow-elders? . . . You should aim not at being 'little tin gods' but as examples of Christian living in the eyes of the flock committed to your charge.")

Here endeth the reading from Webster. The congregation will now rise and sing: "By grace I'm Saved, Grace Free and Boundless."

Liberally yours,
Theophilus

Strange Doings Section: We are still debating women's suffrage, but we reserve the longest and loudest applause for Mrs. O. R. Harms, who was the subject of an admiring resolution. It reminded me of Mrs. Theophilus whom "Bert" Harms so ably represents. They all have certain characteristics: 1) They look at the friends of their husbands with a compassionate sense of humor. 2) They see enemies of their husbands (e.g., Sauerbraten) with an eschatological patience.

I am sure that "Bert" was thinking of Mrs. Theophilus and her thousands of sisters all over the planet whose story is still to be written. I, too, thought of Mrs. Theophilus and was very sorry that she could not come. She had planned to be present. She said that she was sure that her husband would deliver the speech which would change Synod over night. But then she told me that John needed a new bike to cover his newspaper route and Elsie, now a self-conscious high school freshman, had to have her teeth straightened. Mrs. Theophilus had really been looking forward to New York. She wanted to do some shopping on Sixth Avenue and on 14th Street where she had heard things were cheap. Above all, she wanted a new bathing suit for their vacation in Wisconsin. Her old one, she said, had a hole in the knee.

But hundreds of her sisters were there, sitting patiently in the galleries (at $1 a day) wondering if the money available would permit them to take a taxi to the Bowery. So — let this be a small tribute to the ladies in the galleries, the watchers and the holy ones, those who serve even if they only stand and wait. They are the quiet undercurrents in the flowing of the healing rivers of God, and they can look forward to a heaven where there will be no more arguments about women's suffrage. They will sing and clap their hands just like the members of floor committees and district presidents. I hope to live long enough to see Synod kneel in a prayer of thanks for them.

Just like you I read the post-convention of the Lutheran Witness with a magnifying glass and ruler. These boys are first-rate reporters, and I was interested in what they had to say. As usual their efforts were good — they reported many things accurately, skirted others, and ignored some. In every case they were right. About five or six times I thought I heard the whistle of the censor's whip in the shadows above their editorial lamps. Suggestion: Each convention year there should be two post-convention issues of the Witness — one like this and one in which the editors would present their sub rosa comments, their whispered asides, and their magnificent mumblings. This issue would be printed on asbestos, would be suitable for framing, and would cost $10. All of the ten bucks would go to the editors in order to repay them at least partially for some of the mail they must read week after week.

One thing about The Lutheran Witness report disturbed me. The reporter referred to the resolution on Valparaiso University (a very good one) as an "iceberg resolution". That got me. I have lived in the Missouri Synod long enough to recognize a dirty crack at binocular distance. But the meaning of this one was beyond me. An "iceberg" is dangerous, nine-tenths below the surface, and its course is unpredictable. I have referred the matter to the libel experts in our School of Law.

SAML — The response to the organization of SAML (Society Against Messing around with the Liturgy) as announced in the last issue of these yellow sheets has been tremendous. Before I left for New York I had four post-cards applying for membership; and at New York eleven more brethren told me (usually as we passed each other on the escalator) that they would like to join. These brethren are now asked to forward their names and addresses
to us. They will receive a tasteful pink and beige membership card now being printed. Meanwhile, plans for the first national convention of the Society in Denver in 1969 are being made. It will be held at the tavern nearest to the headquarters hotel. There will be addresses by some of the biggest nuts in Synod, a message from Brother Paul VI, and a first performance of the Mass in H–Dur (or Moll). This will be scored for two timpani, a musical saw and a washboard, and will be written by a member of the Society of St. Helen.

Final Note: As dusk came down over the shiny, brittle, apocalyptic Babylon on the Hudson, I wandered to the hotel door to see the brethren leave for home. The space around the entrance had become an Armageddon of preachers' cars and taxicabs. When I left later, the brethren were winning by two bent fenders, but they had lost in the battle of words. The drivers were quoting words of Scripture, but not always in the same context and order. I stood in the gathering twilight and watched the church return to work. These were the brethren who had come to the Kingdom for such a time as this. They were serving a church which had been called in an article published while they were going home "compromised, unprophetic, petty, prejudicial, puritanical, moralistic, individualistic, middle-class, white, success oriented, suburban, residential, self-centered, and trivial."

Some of these strange words had been reflected on the floor of the convention. But that was all over now. One brother whispered: "I wired my vicar to preach next Sunday on the Revelation of St. John 21:2. I am going fishing in Canada to see if behind all this I can see it too." Another one leaned out of the door of his Ford and shouted: "See you in Denver — and, if not there, then somewhere." He gunned his motor and turned into Sixth Avenue headed in the right direction.

Beyond Babylon stood the eternal city shining in the evening light, its walls beautiful in their strength, its banners unfurled in the sudden wind — the city being built by my friend and brother at the wheel of a 1965 Ford. He will not fail.

Faithfully yours,

O. P. Kretzmann