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Campus Commentary

VOLUME 1

OCTOBER 1950

No. 2

Dear Brother:

I am most grateful to the brethren who took time out from their busy lives to send a postcard in this general direction to tell me that they would continue to read the CAMPUS COMMENTARY over the breakfast coffee. If your mail is anything like mine (and I imagine it is since preachers seem to be on very many curious mailing lists), you have found it necessary to consign a goodly portion of the daily mail to the waste basket almost immediately upon arrival. If these few notes are held out for a little while, they have accomplished their purpose.

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Many of the replies which I received revolved around the problem of confirmation instruction. Apparently some of the brethren are deeply concerned about our effectiveness in this particular area of our work. I should apologize for making my remarks about the matter somewhat cryptic and vague. That was due to the fact that we here on the campus, who see the reflections of confirmation instruction, are not quite sure as to what is right and what is wrong about it. In general it should be said that our Lutheran boys and girls are exceedingly well-trained in knowledge of the Bible. The recent Scriptural literacy test, the results of which appeared in the *Christian Century*, would find us much better equipped, I am sure. They know pretty well who is who and what is what in the Word of God.

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Things begin to look less favorable when we turn to the problem of their attitudes. Apparently the modern high school exerts a tremendous influence on the ideas and attitudes of our younger generation. As you undoubtedly noted, the keynote of the life of the teenager at a typical high school is conformity. He or she must conform in dress, in manners, in social attitudes, and even in moral ideals. At some high schools, of course, these standards are comparatively high; at others they are deplorably low. When the pastor is operating in confirmation instruction he is therefore consciously or unconsciously fighting a very powerful negative influence. In general, it should be said that our greatest weakness is revealed in this matter of attitudes. They seem to pull many of their moral ideas and ideals out of the dubious and foggy climate which surrounds them in their daily life.

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The answer to all this is, of course, not very easy. Personally, I do believe that a greater emphasis on Christian ethics or moral theology even on the level of confirmation instruction would be a good thing. I know that we have been somewhat suspicious of this since we felt it might lead to a de-emphasis of our insistence on sound indoctrination. On the other hand, it can be said very definitely that also the area of moral theology can and should be essentially doctrinal. The truths of our Christian faith are dynamic truths. They require obedience. Their source and motivation is, of course, God's redeeming love for us, but that love gives us a sense of gratitude and devotion which must be expressed in life. Perhaps I should say that I have found so much interest in this question that with the help of some of the brethren on the campus I hope to return to it at a later date.

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Back to the campus. We closed our enrollment this year at a figure of 1875. The geographical spread of our student body is wider and greater than ever before. The enrollment figure itself represents a decrease of approximately nine percent from the figures of the academic year 1949-1950. This is a little lower percentage of loss than the national figures, but it is still a figure which should give us some concern. If you, my dear brethren, could find the time or instruct someone in your parish to send

us the names of the high school seniors, we would be exceedingly grateful. We can then establish personal contact with them and see if they can be persuaded to come to our Lutheran University.

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Perhaps one of the most astonishing and hopeful signs on our recent horizon has been the remarkable Luther Renaissance which has been going on in Western Europe for a number of years. This has now also come to our shores and is clearly reflected in the book lists of various publishers for the fall season. Outstanding, of course, are the two massive volumes by Bainton and Schwiebert. Both of them make a tremendous contribution to our knowledge of Luther and his times. Both volumes, I understand, are selling widely outside of the Lutheran Church. This is, of course, all to the good. It may be that in years to come historians of the future will point out that one of the most remarkable events in the middle of the twentieth century was the rediscovery of the Great Reformer and his relevance for our day and age.

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A few weeks ago I returned from Washington after three days of listening to government officials telling the educational institutions of America what the immediate future looked like. In general, it is a very dark and discouraging picture. Apparently everyone in Washington feels that we are facing a long period of heavy mobilization, lasting from 10 to 30 years. What this will mean to our younger generation should be the subject of our thoughtful prayers. It is, of course, possible that world conditions may change very rapidly, but at the present moment there seems to be little hope in Washington. The situation, of course, is totally different from what it was in 1941 to 1945. This covers a much longer period and requires a steadiness of purpose which may be exceedingly difficult for the American people to acquire. Certainly the world situation is touching far more people than we sometimes suspect, and it will be definitely reflected in our work here on the campus as well as in all your pastoral work during the coming months.

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As you know, we are making a definite appeal to the brethren this year to remember us in the annual congregational collection. We have just received a fine letter from President Behnken in which he commends the annual offering for Valpo to the favorable attention of all our congregations. For a long time some of us have felt that with comparatively little effort on the annual Valparaiso Sunday, sufficient funds could be gathered to undergird the current operations of the university and permit us to use funds gathered from individuals for the expansion of our program and the improvement of our facilities. I hope, therefore, that it will be possible for you to persuade your good people to remember us generously on the last Sunday of January or on any other Sunday when the offering fits into your congregational program.

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Some of the brethren have expressed a good deal of interest in the various institutes which will be conducted on our campus during the summer of 1951. We are now working on a complete schedule, and I hope to send it to all the members of our clergy within the next few months. I believe that our congregations should be urged to send their pastors and teachers to institutes of this kind, whether they be conducted on our campus or elsewhere. Sometimes the best vacation is not a complete rest but a total change of thought and study. I am certain that some of our institutes will be very attractive to our brethren in the ministry.

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My warmest good wishes to you for a rich measure of divine benediction as you approach the Advent and Christmas season.

Faithfully yours,

O. P. Kretzmann

President