

5-1965

May 1965

O.P. Kretzmann  
*Valparaiso University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholar.valpo.edu/campus\\_commentary](https://scholar.valpo.edu/campus_commentary)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kretzmann, O.P., "May 1965" (1965). *Campus Commentary*. 8.  
[https://scholar.valpo.edu/campus\\_commentary/8](https://scholar.valpo.edu/campus_commentary/8)

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the University Archives & Special Collections at ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Campus Commentary by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at [scholar@valpo.edu](mailto:scholar@valpo.edu).



---

May, 1965

---

Dear Brother:

Let's face it — our brethren in the Missouri Synod are an unpredictable lot. Here are the facts: these yellow sheets may not look like it, but once in a great while I write a paragraph or two over which I have labored long and hard. I sit at my desk in the position of Rodin's "Thinker" and give a certain matter profound thought. Shall I say this? It is necessary to say this? Will the brethren benefit?

This is exactly what happened to the paragraphs in the last issue concerning our system of calling pastors and teachers. Surely, I thought, the brethren will start hacking away on their typewriters and the mail will be full of "damnamus". This, I thought, was a burning problem.

And what happened? Exactly nothing! Not a word! There was plenty of mail — some very good stuff — concerning loneliness on Christmas Eve — quite a few letters about Theophilus — some on the Mayflower statement — but none — not one — about the profound paragraphs on calling servants of the Church. I even mentioned bishops, and there was no reaction.

Conclusion: When I turn solemn, cynical or serious, the brethren reach for the sports pages or Stoeckhardt and let me sit talking to myself. I am now asking the printer to mark such paragraphs with a little red star. The meaning of the red star would be that this is dangerous and heavy stuff and that the brethren should be free to skip it.

P.S.: After I wrote the above, two letters finally drifted in. One brother wrote: "Lay off. My district president is the very best." The other said: "Give the Holy Spirit room to work. No bishops for me."

\* \* \*

On April Fools day, appropriately enough, the door flew open and Theophilus appeared. I was really glad to see him. He looked more intelligent than usual. "Theophilus," I said, "what have you been thinking about lately?" He answered: "I'm glad you asked that. For several weeks I have been giving some profound thought to the convention of Synod in Detroit in June. It promises to be quite a clambake. Let me tell you what I think." I nodded. Theophilus proceeded:

"I have been wandering around the church lately and, frankly, I am deeply disturbed. I sense that something is going on which is likely to deprive us of much material for midnight conversations. I refer, of course, to the fact that I and my friends have lived for a long time on a diet of what is wrong with the church. Let me hasten to add, since I know that gleam in your eye, that I am speaking of the institutional church which has provided us with so much rich material in recent years. It is precisely this which has me worried. Something is going on and if no one does anything about it we may find ourselves staring morosely at each other without anything to say about our favorite topic.

"As I wander around I hear people speaking a language which hasn't been heard around here for several centuries. Some of my best friends are pastors, as you know, and I have always been the first to defend their views when it was clear that they knew their place. But as I eavesdrop around I hear them saying the kind of revolutionary things which upset people. It almost reminds me of what happened in Galilee and Judea two thousand years ago. I hear them quoting the words of our Lord, 'As my Father has sent me, so I send you' which is to be the theme of the Detroit convention, if this bit of information hasn't penetrated your ivory tower yet. What disturbs me is that they are not only saying the words, but they seem to believe that they mean something. You won't believe this, and it will disturb your most cherished prejudices, but I read the other day that we are being asked to understand ourselves as the mission of Christ to the world, that we should look upon the church as the instrument through which Christ does for the world all the things which He did when the Father sent Him into the world, to care about people as people, and not as statistics, to love them for themselves and not as potential supporters of the Church's program, to stand up to

the pillars of our society and call them whited sepulchers full of rotting bones, to mix with publicans and sinners, to call Herod a fox when he misuses the taxpayers' money — and things like that.

"As I don't have to tell you, but will to make sure, this is a most disturbing concept. If we begin to exist for the sake of the world, all kinds of things can happen. Maybe my Christianity will not be tabulated and evaluated according to the number of times I have been to church and the size of my contribution. Maybe the failings in these two things will not be considered the disease which plagues me so much as the symptoms of it. Maybe we will not be so pathologically concerned about the image which we have presented to the rest of Christendom. Maybe we won't lie awake nights because we are not the largest Lutheran body in America, or because people are beginning to say that 'Missouri is changing'. Maybe we will even come to the point where we will be prepared to spend ourselves out of existence for the sake of the Body of Christ in the world. You can see what can happen if we begin to believe that the New Testament means what it says about the Church being the Body of Christ, or the grain of wheat that has to die in the earth so that fruit will come up.

"I must confess that in all these dark moments of mine, every once in a while a ray of light flashes by my peripheral vision but when I try to catch it in the center it escapes me again. What would happen if we really believed this? Wouldn't the walls come tumbling down again and let us loose in God's world in a mad, exhilarating springtime freshness of His love and the wonders of His Gospel? Just think what could happen if we really meant what is being said, if we really believed it, and if we were ready to throw ourselves and all we have on the mercy and grace of God, and throw away our crutches.

"Where was I? Oh, yes, you asked me what I thought about the Detroit convention. My suggestion about the physical arrangements may not be very practical but I would like to see a double layer of concrete poured over the whole place of meeting to keep the rats and the termites from getting in. Then I would like to have the roof taken off the building so that all we could see when we talk and pray is God's own heaven and the Holy Spirit coming down in flames of fire.

"But now to get practical — Oh, you haven't time to listen any more? Well, don't say I didn't warn you."

With this comment Theophilus eased out of the chair and headed for the door. I sat silent, bemused, and watched him go out into the spring sunshine.

\* \* \*

A few days later I spent some happy hours paging through the workbook which will be the basis for our synodical convention in Detroit. It comprises 458 pages — with some very good ideas, some very, very bad ideas, and some which our Lord and Master will read and say: "My children must have something to play with." It will be a good convention.

Of course, not all overtures and recommendations are printed in this great volume. Some, I have been informed, are unprintable and must be conveyed to the proper committee orally with no reporter within hearing distance. I can understand that, because the other Theophilus and I have just joined a group which hopes to snow Synod with a storm of memorials collecting all dubious quotations, all rumors, all attacks on the leadership of Synod, all evidences of unionism, legalism, lodgery, neo-orthodoxy, modernism, Darwinism and Hegelianism. We hope to turn all this material over to a Baptist layman for publication just before the Synodical convention. If you are a delegate, be sure to look at your seat, because there should be a copy of our document waiting for you. This particular move will enable the delegates to come to Detroit properly prepared to wield the axe of the Spirit, furnish theological undergirding for the virtue of hate, and prepare the Synod adequately for new services and great conquests. We feel that we owe this to our brethren.

Still talking about Synod: Some time ago I spent an hour examining the list of candidates for Synodical offices prepared by the Nominating Committee. Really a tremendous job well done! To my surprise I find that I know about eighty per cent of the candidates — perhaps one reward for forty years of wandering in and out of parsonages.

With rare exceptions I know these candidates most favorably. They are intelligent churchmen and good leaders. Most of them have been tried in the furnaces of Synodical politics. (Voice from the rear: "Brother, that is the kiss of death for some of these guys.")

A little footnote: There is no woman on the entire list anywhere. I have no strong opinions in this matter, and yet I would like to take the privilege of nominating Mrs. Theophilus for chairman of the Board for Parish Education. She has had more children (six) than any of the candidates on the list and really knows what education is all about. If you are a delegate, I hope you will join me in a write-in campaign for Mrs. Theophilus.

\* \* \*

After the next few paragraphs appear in print, my friends and enemies will really know what they have long suspected — that I am an obscurantist, an anti-intellectual, unmodern, unscientific, and a dope all around. My only justification lies in the fact that somebody ought to say something now. Do

you remember the story of the little girl watching the parade of the king who was riding down the street with no clothes on? All of the other watchers stood silent, either reverently or fearfully. The king was king, and he was always right. Only the little girl saw the truth and had the courage to cry out: "The king has no clothes on!"

So also in our day the world and the Church need a few little girls (or boys) who yell, "The king has no clothes on" — who see the post-modern world as it really is with complete and prophetic realism — and its naked, bare fraud. Or, as Chesterton once said: "Today the greatest courage is to stand on a housetop and cry: 'Two plus two equals four.'" "

**All this is by way of introduction to what I want to say: For some years I have watched certain developments at theological seminaries (our own included) which require the "little girl approach". About twenty or thirty years ago some theological faculties decided that their students knew enough about God and not enough about man. And so new courses proliferated — psychology, pastoral psychology (whatever that is), sociology, psychiatry, counseling (including non-directive counseling), youth work, teen-age problems, marriage counseling, psychosomatic biology and so on. Let me say hastily that there is a hard core of truth in all these disciplines; but let me also add that much of the stuff is strictly for the birds. Many of the "modern" ideas in these areas are the best frauds since the days of astrology and alchemy.**

**Let me bring Theophilus as an example.** He has been in the ministry over twenty years. He is no dope. He has been around. He went from a church in the inner-city to one in Suburbia and discovered that the difference between them, spiritually and intellectually, was the difference between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee.

Yesterday he sat in his study, face to face with a wayward teen-ager who had tried to burn down the local school (not a bad idea). Hastily Theophilus tried to recall all that he had heard and read about such a problem in the last twenty years. He was to be non-directive. He was to probe, very gently, for the real reason for the boy's aberration. It may have been pre-natal. (Editorial note: Pre-natal experience is always a good place to land. Nobody can prove you are wrong.) Perhaps there were some traumatic experiences in his childhood. Perhaps the boy's father smoked a pipe and matches were all over the house. Or his mother wore a red dress at his baptism. All these possibilities had to be considered. The primary technique was to dig deep into the subconscious or unconscious. All the kid would say was: "I tried to boin the school down because I don't like my teacher and I hoped she would boin with it." But this explanation was far too simple. Even if he were telling the truth the question remained: "Why does he hate his teacher?"

And so on. **Theophilus fidgeted and tried to remember all the things he had learned. All the time his Bible was on the desk about six inches from his right hand, but somehow he had forgotten how to use it. The imperative and eternal sequence of sin, repentance, grace, forgiveness — and punishment — had been laid aside for a dubious sub-Christian approach to the problem. Suddenly Theophilus knew that he was trying to lead a human soul with irrelevant jargon.**

**Warning:** Never throw all these behavioral sciences aside without taking a long, hard look at them. God is not dead, and He may be giving us some new insights. But after you have taken your own look, rise up and cry: "The king has no clothes on." There is more hard and good psychology in the magnificent skill with which Nicodemus is thrown for a loss in the gentle irony of our Lord's question: "Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?" — in the divine irony of our Lord's question to the woman taken in adultery: "Where are those that condemn thee?" — in the spiritual schizophrenia of St. Paul: "The things I would do." — or even in the hot, guilt-laden tears of Peter at dawn on Good Friday. There is more sound psychology in these passages than in many of the textbooks. We must try to see man as God sees him — semper peccator, semper penitens, semper justus. This alone will give us a heavenly, eternal perspective which will enable us to see the endless and fascinating panorama of life just a little as God always sees it . . . with compassion in Jesus Christ . . . and with high intelligence because it knows God . . .

\* \* \*

**As I examined some of the memorials and overtures presented to our convention in Detroit in June,** I suddenly remembered the statement by G. K. Chesterton in his **The Everlasting Man:**

"One of my first journalistic adventures, or misadventures, concerned a comment on Grant Allen, who had written a book about the Evolution of the Idea of God. I happened to remark that it would be much more interesting if God wrote a book about the evolution of the idea of Grant Allen. And I remember that the editor objected to my remark on the ground that it was blasphemous; which naturally amused me a little. For the joke of it was, of course, that it never occurred to him to notice the title of the book itself, which really was blasphemous; for it was, when translated into English, 'I will show you how this nonsensical notion that there is a God grew up among men.' My remark was strictly pious and proper; confessing the divine purpose even in its most seemingly dark or meaningless manifestations. In that hour I learned many things, including the fact that there is something purely acoustic in much of that agnostic sort of reverence. The editor had not seen the point, because in the title of the book the long word came at the beginning and the short word at the

end; whereas in my comment the short word came at the beginning and gave him a sort of shock. I have noticed that if you put a word like God into the same sentence with a word like dog, these abrupt and angular words affect people like pistol-shots. Whether you say that God made the dog or the dog made God does not seem to matter; that is only one of the sterile disputations of the too subtle theologians. But so long as you begin with a long word like evolution the rest will roll harmlessly past; very probably the editor had not read the whole of the title, for it is rather a long title and he was rather a busy man.

But this little incident has always lingered in my mind as a sort of parable. Most modern histories of mankind begin with the word evolution, and with a rather wordy exposition of evolution in this case. There is something slow and soothing and gradual about the word and even about the idea. As a matter of fact, it is not, touching these primary things, a very practical word or a very profitable idea. Nobody can imagine how nothing could turn into something. Nobody can get an inch nearer to it by explaining how something could turn into something else. It is really far more logical to start by saying 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth' even if you only mean 'In the beginning some unthinkable power began some unthinkable process.' For God is by its nature a name of mystery, and nobody ever supposed that man could imagine how a world was created any more than he could create one. But evolution really is mistaken for explanation. It has the fatal quality of leaving on many minds the impression that they do understand it and everything else; just as many of them live under a sort of illusion that they have read the **Origin of Species.**"

**University Commercial:** Following are a few sentences from term papers presented in a class on "Christianity and Modern Problems" at Valpo. **Please note that not one of the writers quoted is headed for seminaries. They are just graduating seniors preparing for engineering, law, teaching, medicine, social work and so on. They are the new laity, and they are very important.** From an essay on the "Status Minded Church": "What do people want in a pastor? Success often seems to be related to the minister's ability to be popular with his congregation . . . The Christian must be constantly aware of the temptation to succumb to status-seeking."

From a paper on "The Symbolical Treatment of Marriage in the Bible": "There is a mystery here . . . What we can understand, however, from what the Biblical writers tell us, both about marriage and about God in relation to His people, is that this oneness is not merely a command but a gift of God and that it is to be cherished as a measure of His wonderful grace and mercy."

From "Questions and Answers in the Gospel of St. John" (not a bad topic for a series of sermons): "Christ answered those questions he chose to answer in such a way that they fitted the situation and the belief or unbelief of the questioning party. Many times He said something entirely irrelevant to the initial question but very pertinent to the times or the need of the individual. When unbelief showed its ugly head, Christ answered in parables. Occasionally He answered questions in a direct way . . . but only occasionally."

From an essay, "Poverty of Spirit": "For Luther the ultimate determinant is whether one is awaiting the riches of the Father. In this light, and only in this light, can these beatitudes be understood." Luther stated, "This point and all the rest that follows are purely fruits of faith which the Holy Spirit Himself must create in the heart. Wherever there is no faith, there the Kingdom of Heaven will also remain outside."

I could fill a whole issue of these random notes with quotations from these papers. Please remember again that these are children of the twentieth century, not practicing theologians, but future lay members of the Church. I think that they are the finest guarantee of our basic ability to meet the needs of the future.

\* \* \*

**Another Commercial:** Several weeks ago I asked members of our Department of Theology to present topics which they would be willing to discuss at pastoral conferences throughout the nation. I am now listing the topics which they listed exactly as they were offered to me. Perhaps I should add that unless the sums involved are too large, we would be happy to pay for at least a part of the expenditures involved in bringing one of my colleagues to your pastoral conference. Here is the list:

RAST: Are the Dead Sea Scrolls Important for Theology?

DROEGE: The Impact of Psychotherapy on the Practice and Theology of the Church

SENNE: How God Reveals Himself in Primitive Religions

The Church and Preventative Mental Health (Family Guidance, Church's Responsibility, etc.)

LUTZE: Heretical Implications in Traditional Positions Found in the Church

Human Relations and Preaching

SCHROEDER: The Layman and Christ's Church

Some Lutheran Questions to Bultmann's Theology

What Do the Lutheran Confessions Say about Hermeneutics?

KORBY: A Program for Re-establishing Private Confession and Absolution in our Congregations  
Open the Bible for Children

LASKY: Luther's Approach to Christian Ethics

SCHULZE: Race and the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms

EVERIST: The Concept of "nomos" in Romas

WIDIGER: **A Theological Foundation for Pastoral Care and Counseling**  
 BOEHRINGER: **Liturgy and Evangelism**  
                   **Baptism: A Force for Renewal in the Parish**  
 BROCKOPP: **The Ethics of Contemporary Church Music**  
                   **Preaching and the Sacraments**  
 BRETSCHER: **The Shape of the Gospel in the Contemporary World**  
                   **The Theology of St. Matthew**  
 BAEPLER: **The Modern Meaning of Ancient Heresy: Gnosticism**  
                   **The Old and the New in Hermeneutics**  
                   **The Church and Public Life: Forming the Christian Conscience**

\* \* \*

**Footnote to history:** And so they buried Winston Churchill about three months ago with all the traditional pomp and circumstance which the British can command when they remember their finest hours. As usual, the most definitive and final word is (of all places) in the New Yorker:

"The world heard again the voice of Chatham, of Shakespeare's Henry V, of immemorial heroes that warmed the blood of the tired steed of England. It was the instinctive knowledge that this man from a line of British dukes and American revolutionaries was a champion who meant to win and who would therefore win. In the worst moments, when the Hitlerian holocaust seemed nearly certain to consume the whole world, Churchill by his every phrase, gesture, grumble and smile, made it evident that this was a nightmare in which he for one was wide awake and that in the midst of evil, life continued to have good things. He was one of the very best of them. Now the great man is gone. The last long cavalry charge is over, and we live in a lesser time."

\* \* \*

**Another footnote to history:** At least four or five brethren sent me the following verses:

**"An Updated Church"  
 (Conservatives' Lament)**

Latin's gone  
 Peace tool  
 Singin' and shoutin'  
 From every pew.

Altar's turned 'round  
 Priest is tool  
 Commentator's yellin'  
 Page twenty-two.

Communion rail's gone  
 Stand up straight.  
 Kneelin' suddenly  
 Went out of date.

Processions are formin'  
 In every aisle.  
 Salvation's organized  
 Single file.

Rosary's out  
 Psalms are in.  
 Hardly ever hear  
 A word against sin.

Listen to lector  
 Hear how he reads.  
 Please stop rattlin'  
 Them ros'ry beads.

Padre's lookin' puzzled,  
 Doesn't know his part.  
 Used to know the whole deal  
 In Latin by heart.

I hope all the changes  
 Are just about done.  
 That they don't drop bingo  
 Before I've won!

**The Emerging Layman**

The Layman's emerging  
 Who let him out?  
 He's going to cause confusion  
 Without any doubt.

He's going to start checking  
 If things are all right  
 He may even wonder  
 If Father's real bright.

Who taught that chap  
 To pray out loud?  
 He was easier to handle  
 In a nice quiet crowd.

Someone grab his missal  
 Swipe his hymn book too,  
 Nudge him off the lecturn  
 Back into the pew.

Submerge that layman  
 Lower the boom  
 We'll have this church again  
 Quiet as a tomb.

\* \* \*

I herewith present some exact quotes from a recent issue of one of the fly-by-night journals circulating in Synod. I ask you to examine these quotes very carefully and thoughtfully. One of them refers to brethren who "pervert God's Word and thereby send souls to hell". I would very much like to see the brother who actually does this. Another quotation refers to congregations who are withholding mission monies from the Church because "they feel they cannot any longer trust our Synodical officials to use the money for the Lord's work since they permit God's enemies to be supported by Synod's mission funds." So my young brother preaching Christ on a dusty Indian road has become an enemy of God. This must be an even greater surprise to God—who can look into my brother's heart—than it is to me. If this sort of thing stands up on Judgment Day, I know nothing at all about the mind of God.

\* \* \*

**Closing note for your graduation anniversary in June:** As pastors (the best name for our ministry) we are members of the human family, not angels or spirits. We are of the same stuff as our flocks. To us, as to all men, the formula applies with singular relevance lest we succumb to vanity and pride: "Remember man that thou art dust and that thou wilt return to dust." We, too, are of the dust of the earth, clay of God's fashioning. We did not make ourselves. He made us. His rights over us by virtue of His creative act are absolute — to make, to break, to remake according to his good pleasure. We are not like the angels who, though created beings, are yet creatures of unalloyed and unconfined spirit. We have bodies with bodily needs. And so the day will come when our bodies will return to dust, will decay like dead leaves and pass again into the stockpile of inert matter.

But there is also the other side of the story: "The Lord . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." At this moment, not only the world, but the whole material universe, culminated and found its ultimate meaning. Without this, sun and stars and earth and sea were like a play without an audience or even a protagonist. Until a human soul first looked out from human eyes, creation was only half finished. And this creative act has gone on these many centuries. It still goes on today. With our own souls a new fact came into existence. The same creative activity that placed the sun in the heavens and set the stars rolling in their courses was called into play in our own case. The result was you and I. So we, too, are really the crown of creation, composed of matter and of spirit. We alone can offer to God who is all Spirit, the gratitude of His material universe.

This we share with our flocks — this common humanity. It makes us part of them, with the same joys and sorrows, the same pain and tears, the same origin and the same destiny. And yet: There is also a difference. We, more than any other group of men in life and time represent the second part of man — his soul. We do not despise the body. We recognize its needs, its failings by reason of sin, but in a singular sense we are always pulling the pendulum toward the soul — that which makes man man — that which is the heart of the redemptive activity of the living God.

And as always this must begin with ourselves, our own souls, our own faith, our own growth and wisdom and knowledge, our own sanctification. It is a curious parallel with the story of the creation of man that many centuries later the same picture appears again: John 20:22 "And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained." This is really another act of creation. With one breath God created the whole human family; with another breath his Son created the ministry of the New Testament, the men who more than any others were to make God tangible and visible and audible before the hearts of men. We have been created twice over, to be in an especially high and holy sense His messengers, His voices, the representatives of His pity over the delirium of fallen man.

**Have a blessed Pentecost.**

*O. P. Kretzmann*

**P.S.**

I have just talked to the men in charge of our physical facilities and I would now like to invite any of you who are coming to Detroit for the Synodical Convention to stop here at any time while you are on your way. As you know, Valpo is about five hours drive from Detroit, and I thought that those of you who are driving from the West might just as well stay on our campus here. Rooms in one of our dormitories (probably Dau Hall) will be available to you and your family at no cost. If you are interested and want to stay with us for a night or two, please write to Prof. A. C. Koester, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana. When you arrive on the campus, check in at the student Union on the new campus and your rooms will be assigned to you. We certainly would be happy and honored to have you as our guests.

**O. P. K.**