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CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Harry A. Huth, D.D. 1917-1979

After a prolonged illness, Professor Harry A. Huth, D.D., departed this life on August 7, 1979. In the course of his thirty-nine year ministry in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, he served Concordia Theological Seminary as Professor of Systematic Theology for ten years during two periods, 1963-1969 and 1975-1979. His special responsibility and delight was the teaching of those courses dealing with the Lutheran Confessions. During the intervening period of absence from the Seminary, 1969-1975, Dr. Huth served as executive assistant to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. In this capacity and as the Seminary's representative to the Commission, he was responsible for the preparation in both content and style of many of the Commission's documents written in direct response to questions arising from the Synod's theological crisis during the late 1960's and early 1970's.

Though Dr. Huth engaged in formal graduate study at secular and theological graduate schools, his expertise in the Lutheran Confessions and philosophy was developed through personal study during his years as a parish pastor. The depth and breadth of his understanding of philosophy was unmatched. Without benefit of manuscript he would scan the history of the development of Western philosophy, stopping to probe at the critical junctures. His informal conversations would attract eager audiences of students and colleagues. Nevertheless, it will be for his understanding of the Lutheran Confessions that Harry Huth will be remembered by the church.

He escalated to prominence when the influence of the Lutheran Confessions was reaching a nadir point in Missouri Synod history. As a parish pastor serving rural congregations he began that confessional study which later in life would bring him to a position of generally recognized authority in both the Synod and the Seminary. Without exception the seminarians recognized in Harry Huth a man who was completely at home in the Lutheran Confessions. Already before his death he became legendary for

his method of addressing contemporary theological questions on the basis of the Lutheran Confessions. While most contemporary Lutheran scholarship has come to regard the Confessions as merely historical documents, Dr. Huth saw them as living witnesses to the truth of Holy Scripture whose testimony is as valid today as when they were first written. This is his great legacy to the Seminary and to the church.

During the last score of years Dr. Huth suffered a succession of heart attacks, and he lived those years with an eschatological awareness that he could pass through death into life at any moment. He was quite open and forthright about his imminent death and frequently expressed a longing to be released from this world to enjoy the bliss of the continual presence of the Lord whom he served. His students and his colleagues listened to him as to a man whom they knew God planned to take from their midst within a very short time.

Though Dr. Huth suffered deteriorating health, he never relinquished any of his responsibilities for the Seminary or Synod. His devotion to his work greatly exceeded what would be expected of a person with such physical problems. In the summer of 1979, Dr. Huth taught in both the first and second summer sessions, and both classes were filled to capacity. The students knew that his time was coming to an end and wanted a privilege which they knew could never be duplicated. Two weeks after the close of the summer sessions, Dr. Huth suffered a heart attack which was the prelude to the final one. Thus, though plagued with disease, he remained at his post working to the end and did not have to endure prolonged hospitalization. In teaching the Lutheran Confessions right up to the time of his death, he was doing the thing in life which he enjoyed doing most — and the things for which he was recognized by all as peerless. His students and colleagues all feel a sense of profound loss, but they are grateful that God provided them for at least a time with such a profound exponent of the Lutheran Confessions.

It was, in fact, during the years in which he began to suffer from heart disease that Professor Huth was most productive in his service to the Synod in general and the Seminary in particular. He was not a man who was interested in the organizational aspects of either Seminary or Synod, but he was very concerned for their theological health. God used this concern in a signal way to apply the healing balm of His Word to an ailing church. And so the Lord of the church has now decided that it is time to say to Dr. Harry Huth, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

The Editor