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Preface

This issue of the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY is intended to serve as a fraternal greeting to Martin Franzmann on the occasion of his 65th birthday. A good deal more than mere congratulations, however, seeks expression here. On behalf of our whole church body and especially on behalf of Concordia Seminary where he served for 23 years, the faculty of the seminary and the contributors to this issue wish to voice their sense of profound appreciation and gratitude for the unique gift that God has given to all of us in this scholar-poet-teacher-churchman.

As anyone who knows Martin Franzmann will testify, it is risky business to try to pay tribute to him. Not only is this the last thing he would ever expect, much less desire, but anything that could be said — short of seemingly maudlin eulogy — would fail to reflect adequately either the depth of admiration and respect in which he is held by those who know him or the remarkable quality and significance of the contribution he has made by his person and his work to the life and theology of the church in which he spent the prime years of his career. Knowing, however, that the value of any formal tribute is measured not so much by its intrinsic worth as by the gracious understanding of its recipient, we are bold enough to dedicate this issue of the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY to him.

The men who have prepared the essays presented here have all been marked by the influence of Martin Franzmann. Whether that influence has always worked itself out along lines he himself would have wished or commended cannot be said. But Martin Franzmann never sought to create a school of Franzmannian disciples. Rather his concern has always been to win disciples for that Master Teacher whose words of invitation he chose as the title of his book on the first gospel: *Follow Me!*

The spiritual vocation of discipleship has for him never been separated from the concept embodied in its verbal congener, discipline — the rigorous discipline of academic scholarship in its highest form wedded to the discipline of self in the full freedom of the Gospel.

Mention has already been made of his capacity as a poet. Perhaps that is the best clue to understanding both the special gift he has brought to our church and to the men he has influenced as teacher and colleague. As poet, Martin Franzmann possesses an acute sensitivity to the nature of language and its use as a vehicle of God's revelation in history. He was among the first to introduce genuine historical awareness to our church's study of Holy Scripture and thus enabled us to break out of an interpretive methodology that read the sacred record as if it were merely a collection of dogmatic propositions. But at the same time he constantly opposed his intuitive feeling for the rich poetic quality of Biblical language to the equally arid pedantry of mere historicizing exegesis. Above all, his teaching, his preaching, his daily conversation, and his writing made strikingly

and contemporaneously articulate that Word whose quintessential nature is the "radical Gospel" — and the phrase is his own.

But beyond theologizing and preaching, Martin Franzmann has used his poetic gift — seemingly without effort — to give expression to the kind of genuine, unselfconscious piety that ennobles any life that has been touched by this "radical Gospel." His little volume of prayer-poems, *Pray for Joy*, repeatedly brings both gentle tears and understanding smiles simultaneously to the faces of my own family as it enables us to open to God the recesses of our individual hearts in our evening family devotions. For us the generation gap is bridged in this shared moment when words and Word, life and work, play and sorrow are blended for us through the ministering gift of his faith-rooted conversations with his God and ours.

For such a servant of the Word, the essays here presented offer to God the praise of earnest hearing and heeding, and to Martin Franzmann himself the warmest thanks and most cordial greeting.

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ED. NOTE: Each contributor to this issue accepted an assignment that Martin Franzmann set for himself in his work as teacher and interpreter: Help the reader to read a Biblical book (or, in two cases, important noncanonical books) so that he can get a clear understanding of what God is saying in judgment and in grace in the pages of this book. — H. T. M.