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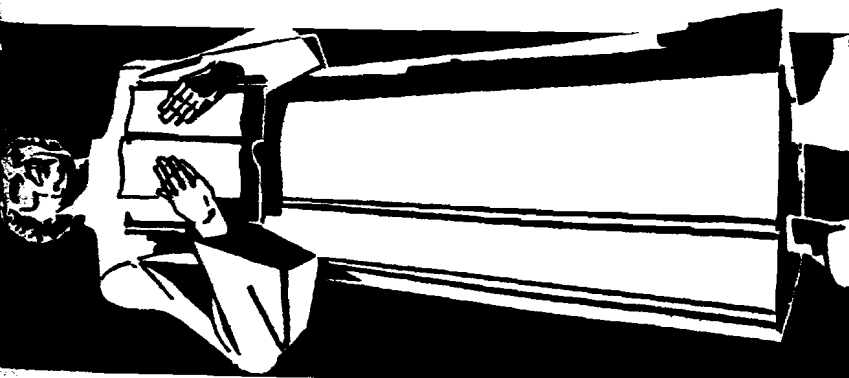
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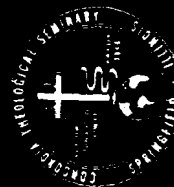
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VOL. XXXIV • NO. 3

DECEMBER, 1970



Inaugural Address

RICHARD J. SCHULZ

TO BORROW THE WORDS of Springfield's most famous citizen, the world will little note nor long remember what we do at Concordia Theological Seminary. Serenely isolated on a few green acres in the northeastern corner of the city which is the heart of Lincolnland, our seminary must appear to many to be more remote from the realities of mid-twentieth century human activity than Venus is from the Earth. In a day of sky-jackers, radical rejection of long-standing values, and exploding campuses, it seems uniquely unreal that grown men are wrestling with the distinction between a first and second aorist in Greek grammar, or puzzling over the progression of thought in the church councils of the past.

The Western world has seen ages when to be educated at all was to be theologically educated. Existent schools served the prime and sole purpose of preparing leaders for the institutionalized Christian church. The men who issued from the schools of those centuries literally ruled society. The sacerdotal power of the priestcraft was able then to force political and military power to bend the knee in submission to the dictates of the clergy. The school of the priests ruled the world.

Those days are long past. Rapidity of technological and scientific advance and the radical rearrangement of human interrelationships has—and I think happily—stripped the clergy of political power and forced the church and the clergy to reassess its position in the world of men.

The test, then, of a theological seminary's acumen is in its assessment of the role of the church and the clergy in a day of social transition. It is not what happens on our campus, or on the campuses of all the theological seminaries, that is of instant moment. It is what happens in the professional careers of the men whom we regularly send out into the world that is important.

Having been catapulted in eight years from the role of pastor in a peaceful suburban parish in Western New York (with all of the emoluments and serenity adhering to the enviable position) into leadership of one of the great theological seminaries of our country, I have been forced to ask the hard questions about the function of the church. In short, I have been faced with the question of what we are about. Every year men from colleges and universities and from various careers assemble in Springfield saying, "We want to be Lutheran pastors."

By ecclesiastical arrangement, the seminaries guard the gateway to the ministerial office. Faculties of seminaries are charged with the ultimate decision of who may or may not legitimately place a "Rev" before his name. They do this in fear and trembling, be-

ing aware that while seminaries seem to be splendidly insulated, the men who go forth from the seminaries wield a powerful influence in cities and towns and hamlets throughout the country and, indeed, throughout the world. The weekly audiences of the living graduates of our seminary are legion. The daily pastoral ministrations of men who have studied theology in Springfield provide manifold opportunities to affect the beliefs and attitudes and behavior patterns of a host of church members.

We are keenly aware that a seminary cannot take total credit—or total blame—for the subsequent careers of its students. The making of a minister begins in his early family life. Dedication and motivation to serve humanity as a man of the cloth must be present when a student first matriculates at a seminary. Moreover, we know that the seminary career itself, endless as it must seem to students, is but a propaedeutic for a lifetime of study. That which goes before and that which follows the seminary interlude are largely determinative of a man's success as a pastor, or missionary, or chaplain or teacher.

The validity of a theological seminary is a function of the validity and viability of the church itself in our age. To maintain a seminary at considerable expense, to absorb the energies of a faculty of scholars, and to entice men to "study for the ministry" is to say that the continuation of the message and ministry of Jesus Christ is not only desirable but even vital for the world today.

It is this faith which sustains our seminary. Every educational institution must erect its superstructure upon a basic conviction that it is needed and important. There never has been a time when there was universal agreement that the church had a vital message. Even at the time of the great Medieval Synthesis there were those who espoused a thoroughly worldly philosophy and who rejected the supernaturalism of the church.

In the final analysis, all philosophies and all opinions regarding the nature and destiny of man and the essence of reality are *faiths*. Pushed to their ultimate extremes, *all* positions must admit that they rest upon empirically unprovable and undemonstrable pre-suppositions. This is no less true of the most rigorously "scientific" point of view than of the most "religious."

The Christian faith offers to the world a set of propositions which are exciting and full of promise. Man is not merely a highly developed animal, but a special creation of God. He came forth from the hand of God and is destined for eternal existence. His only hope for worthy existence beyond his three-score-years-and-ten in a materialistically bounded life on this planet is in the promise of the Creator of all things that in Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, man may yet claim a timeless fulfillment of his potentiality. When asked how we arrive at this conviction, the church answers unblushingly: "It has been revealed." Epistemologically,

the church relies upon the recurring events of God's revelation of His will to men. God has spoken. And His speaking has been recorded and preserved. This is the significance of the Bible. The Bible is not a humanly evolved system of ethics, but a means which God has used to communicate with man.

Relying upon this source of information, the church proclaims to every human being remarkable and astounding data. It says: You are a unique creation. You are intended to live forever. You cannot establish your own connection with life beyond the grave. This has been accomplished for you in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God Who became incarnate and paid the price of His divine life and blood for you. Within this death-defying concept lies the program which God has laid out for His people on this earth.

When Christians understand what they are involved in when they grasp the promises of God, they see themselves as servants of their fellowmen. They care when people are homeless, suffering in pain, or bound up in hatreds and prejudices. Christians are assigned by God to weep with those who mourn, to be peacemakers, and to proclaim the worth of all men in the sight of God. Properly conceived, involvement in the program of Christianity is the most exciting enterprise the world has ever known.

If the program of the church is not merely to provide service to its own members, but to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of all men, then the task of the seminary to provide leaders for such a crusade is significant and important for all who are concerned about the human condition in this world. For this reason our seminary has invited and is gratified at the response of leaders of our community and state in this inauguration. A man named Smith—or Jones—or Schultz is not at all the celebrating focus. The focus is the existence in our city, our state, our nation of a devotion to the Christian dynamic which motivates young men to dedicate their lives to total concern for the physical and spiritual welfare of their fellowmen.

Within this broad concept, it is fitting that a new administration at Concordia Theological Seminary state succinctly its expectations and commitments for the future. The following convictions are meant to be programmatic and prophetic for the immediate future of Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield.

1. Our seminary can be at once confessional, soundly academic, and progressive in its methodology. We are bound to unwavering adherence to the immutable truths which God has revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. No appearance of scholarship shall move us from a clear testimony to what we learn in the pages of Holy Writ. We are convinced, however, that those who are sent forth to proclaim the message of the

Scriptures must do so with a solid grounding in history, the languages, the social sciences and the communicative arts.

2. We anticipate that our seminary will be able to contribute significantly to the dialogue of theological education. We are in an excellent position to be experimental in our methods. We do not see our seminary as a school for "church technicians," capable only of performing the same functions as men of the past. We see the church as a living, dynamic organism which may change its outward form drastically while it continues to proclaim salvation in Christ. We shall be conservative in the sense of not budging an inch from the revealed truths of God, but enthusiastically radical in exploring more effective techniques of communication and even new and experimental forms of the church.

3. We are committed to maintaining on our campus a body of Christian scholars who can effectively communicate the ideals and techniques of clerical leadership to a long line of young men who come to us for training. We are convinced that a theological seminary of our day needs Christian scholars of many disciplines. To this end we are committed to making full use of our own state universities and the best universities of the country so that the most excellent scholarship available to us may be brought to bear upon our task of educating the future clergy.

4. We are committed to maintaining a rigorous academic standard at our seminary, not out of intellectual snobbery or pedagogical peevishness, but out of a conviction that the function of the church in our day demands the application of the most astute scholarship and skill to the task of renewal.

5. We are committed to development of the highest order of spirituality among the teachers and students on our campus. The world rightly expects integrity and demonstrative spirituality of the clergy. It rightly resents those who have made the pastoral calling into a sheer professionalism. No scholarship and no skill can make a man fit for ministry if he is not simultaneously deeply and sincerely spiritual in the very highest sense.

Historic, orthodox Christianity diagnoses the human dilemma of all ages as essentially an estrangement from God. It proclaims with wonder and awe that a God whose creatures forsake Him yet draws near to them in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. It never despairs of the human condition, but steadfastly holds forth the good news that man can live now in fellowship with God and in the fullest achievement of his potentiality as a child of God. It urges all men to live now as God intended man to live, and presents the astonishing assurance of life everlasting.

To maintain this crusade for the souls of men is the purpose and program of Concordia Theological Seminary. So help us God.