



THE SPRINGFIELDER

April 1974
Volume 38, Number 2

An Address

WALTER F. BRUNN

As delivered by Mr. Walter Brunn, member of the Board for Higher Education of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Rev. Dr. Robert Preus as president of Concordia Theological Seminary on September 15, 1974.

PRESIDENT AND MRS. PREUS, BOARD OF CONTROL, FACULTY, STUDENTS, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST:

The Reverend Merlin Pohl, Chairman of the Board for Higher Education, has a long-standing preaching engagement that pre-empt's his time for today. He has asked me to bring you his greetings and to be his representative and that of the BHE for this joyful occasion.

I am sure that I speak for the board members and the staff when I tell you that you, Dr. Preus, as well as Concordia Seminary, Springfield, its board, faculty, and students are very regularly in our personal prayers. We commit our individual and joint concerns regarding the training of pastors and servants of the Church to the Great Shepherd of the sheep. May He endow you, us, and the whole Church with an extra measure of faith and understanding, keeping us reminded that our role is to preach and teach and baptize, leaving the fruitful increase of such faithful testimony in His hands.

None of us, by agreement, ever speaks for the whole board. Speaking as a member of that group, however, on the occasion of the inauguration of your new president, it is well that all of us be reminded of our respective roles in the Church. As the Holy Spirit calls people, He also gathers them into congregations for enlightenment, sanctification, and keeping with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. Congregations and pastors become members of Synod following the example of the apostolic Church and the better to share the diversities of gifts for the common profit. Synod, in turn, divides itself into districts the better for a walking together in service and to join hands in achieving local programs, all the while administering central programs through both central and local boards and officials.

Thus the BHE represents the Synodical central concerns of producing pastors and teachers for the whole Church in 21 schools, the local boards being autonomous in local administration within the constitution and its by-laws.

Still speaking for myself, the BHE as Synod's administrators, and in line with the documents just mentioned, needs to look to the presidents of our schools as the defenders of the Church's doctrine, and to the faculties as the first line of defense of that faith. No other arrangement would make sense, for it is the Church in promulgation of its doctrine that owns and operates its schools *to that end and for that purpose*. Moreover, the only source of doctrine and faith is the Holy Spirit as He expresses Himself in the errorless, verbally-inspired canon. I, for one, know of no doctrine of faith produced by the mind

of man, and that includes man's reason, which in no way is a generating source for doctrine.

Doctrine, by definition, is exclusively iterated by Scripture which we call "Holy" because our Lord and He alone speaks there. God's own Word is the "pure fountain," as Luther calls it, and "the only standard according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas shall and must be discerned and adjusted as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong" (FC, Epit., Intr.). Thus, what God iterates in His Holy Word, we reiterate in expressions and understandings called "confessions" as they age, or "doctrinal statements and resolutions" as they express the contemporary areas that may or may not be in controversion. The doctrines which reverberate and are iterated throughout Holy Scriptures have the Godhead as their exclusive author and, as such, are the exclusive basis for reiteration by the Church. "Thus saith the Lord" and "there it is written" are the principle that remains. Faith and doctrine dare not be made the shuttlecock of man's science and wisdom. Instead these must be built exclusively on the Word of God. Iteration in this sense is the province of God. Reiteration is the expression and reflection of faithful servanthood; and faithfulness unto death is not an expression of length of time, but of degree, calling for willingness to die rather than to let some product of man's reason produce a new law or some perversion of what God has said. That would be slavery, indeed.

I observe, moreover, that the Lord has provided no new revelation since the days of the apostles. That, however, is not to say that the Holy Spirit has not been very active. I can assure you that He has been quite active these many years in the hearts and lives of His people out there in the field, and He is most adequate and effective. We certainly are not benighted masses awaiting make-up courses in doctrine that He has withheld from the Church for up to thousands of years, but has now seen fit to bring to light only in Academia through revolutionary techniques of Scripture interpretation and appreciation. It is not new voices honed and pitched in the realms of science or history that the Church needs to decorate doctrines as though they need credibility or profundity, but vibrant, true-ringing sounding boards resonating the words that the Holy Spirit Himself put into the minds and mouths and pens of the holy writers, words that have not changed, words that we regard as "most certainly true." Thus, we need pastors and teachers thoroughly developed in the Word of God who can reiterate the basics that God has uttered again and again as the holy writers were moved by the Holy Spirit, applying them to the current apostasy into which so many church bodies have fallen. Missouri's glory has been that she has not succumbed to Protestantism's dishwater theology, but has held firmly and faithfully to the one true faith. Missouri's continuing glory will be her faithfulness to her Lord and His Word, for there is no other way. To that end the Church depends on you to furnish faithful pastors, thoroughly capable in today's sophisticated and worldly-wise society to teach and preach the Word in all of its purity.

It is to that end that we are dedicated and to which we commit you and this school. May the Lord bless you and us and grant us His

pardon and peace that passes all human understanding and keep us all with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In closing I would like to bring to your remembrance that a hundred years ago my great-grandfather did quite a job of student recruiting, among other things, sending no small number of catechized candidates from Germany to "Springfield," which at that time was located in Ft. Wayne and later in St. Louis. Moreover, it was Springfield who graciously honored my own father 25 years ago. I recall also that at the Saginaw Delegate Synod the sainted Dr. Graebner of St. Louis pleaded with the convention to close the Springfield seminary the better to concentrate Synod's seminary efforts at St. Louis. I spoke to this as a delegate, pleading that we should be better served with two separate seminaries. That certainly has turned out to be a wise position. What I am trying to say is that my personal connections with this school are considerable, and I speak to you from the fullness of my heart. I deeply appreciate your hospitality, and I wish you God's choicest blessings! He has promised to keep us faithful if we but let Him, and His promises never fail. Thank you!