



# **THE SPRINGFIELDER**

December 1971  
Volume 35, Number 3

# “Congratulations and Commendations”

CLARENCE W. SPIEGEL  
*Senior Faculty Member (1938-*

A SEMINARY IS primarily people. Therefore these lines go out to unnumbered individuals in all the world who intimately and effectively have been identified with Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, in the past, or the not inconsiderable array of persons who are promoting the interests of this school of the prophets today. Actually, this little article does not exclude any one who will be led to devote himself, or herself, to the needs of this institution in days to come.

The rosters of teachers, students, district presidents, and board of control members show that some of the greatest men of our church had a hand in the preservation and development of our seminary, thrown, as it were, into the lap of our synod. What they had to work with was modest and unpretentious. The little compound, lying about a mile and a half to the north-east of the townsite, did have one thing of beauty, the grove of giant trees, which was enjoyed by students and faculty families. Beyond this there was nothing to catch the eye of a person strolling through the area. But the people in charge of this campus made the most of their acquisition, and worked tirelessly at establishing the best seminary that they could afford with their limited means. Considering these circumstances one would judge that they did much with little.

People came, and continued to come, despite the fact that their comforts were practically nil. They carried on, content to supply workers for the Lord as best they could. The resourcefulness manifested by many of these early members of the seminary family was phenomenal. The early curriculum, for instance, did not provide for the study of the Scriptures in the original languages. Not a few students, however, acquired a working knowledge of Greek and Hebrew on the side. Some of them were so successful that they commanded a place among the ranking scholars of their day.

The church which was being served by this school left her, for the most part, to her own resources, giving thought to her needs only now and then, as circumstances practically compelled attention. As the years wore on, the physical and capital assets of the property deteriorated slowly, a fact that will be found to have lasted through three-fourths of the history being reviewed now during our celebration. Whatever is to be set forth as representative of advancement and progress came during the past thirty-five years.

Indeed, the people who were the seminary family in the large sense through the greater span of this institution's history present a roster of men and women who command the attention and respect

of unbiased, contemplative students of history, as well as all sober-minded people.

What should one say to persons who have spent many years of prayers and sweat and tears in the maintenance and furtherance of a school that has brought countless blessings not only to her own community, but to the world at large many times over? We all have the answer. And the more one knows in detail about the circumstances which caused the prayers and sweat and tears, the more profuse one's congratulations will be. We wish the historians much success in their attempts at enlightening the public in that regard.

Any one who has been brought close enough to affairs at this seminary to know what has been done cannot but be filled with unstinted admiration for the valiant, unsung heroes, who have weathered many a storm to bring Concordia where she is today. It is not an overstatement to say that the workers at this place through the years have been long on trials and woes, but short on support and encouragement. The Lord's unfailing promises, however, to those who serve Him under stress and adversity not only sustained these people while they strove manfully to keep this school going, but have seen their fulfillment in the Concordia Theological Seminary, of Springfield, Illinois, now celebrating her one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary.

Truly, commendations are in order. Our church should say to those who have worked in the past, as well as to those at work today, well done! They did not work for the glory that they might have hoped to reap from their labors. They simply had an opportunity to help somehow in the education of pastors. This was important enough for them to become involved in ministerial training to a greater or lesser degree, and to become relatively insignificant for the sake of our Savior's Gospel. Some came for full-time service. Not a few people think of a place on a faculty as an advancement above the pastorate. But this is hardly the case. In the final analysis the Lord's will is the determining factor when one of His servants leaves one position for another in the Church. What is to be commended, therefore, is their willingness to do God's bidding for the love of Christ and the flock which He has purchased with His own blood.

There is much that is commendable about the people who have worked toward the advancement of this seminary for one hundred twenty-five years. Their undaunted spirit has always been a wonder. That goes for synodical officials, board members, administrators, staff members, people in the auxiliaries, or what have you. To know some of them personally, as well as the circumstances under which they labored, is to understand how great they actually were. In many, many instances their greatness has gone unsung. It goes without saying, however, that this seminary would not be where it is today, if these very people had fainted along the way. Some of them have gone to heaven, others are still among the living. If any of them reads these lines, let him be assured that our church is in his debt beyond all human calculation and that, under God, it was his strong spirit

of devotion that helped to make Concordia what she is at this celebration. Whatever our church has failed to do in complimenting him will be made up a thousandfold by our Savior when He receives us all into glory. "Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." I Cor. 15, 58.

How does a church make it up to people when they have done valiantly for one of her institutions? There are, indeed, tangible evidences that could be effected. One might hope that our church can see herself enabled to do better by those who are serving her interests today. What has not been done in the past, however, amounts to an incalculable backlog of debts that far exceed our present church's ability to pay. Little more can be done than to commend this great host of deserving people to Him, Who has promised to be the Reward of those who serve Him faithfully, trust in Him, and live in His fear.

A not insignificant part of this one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary celebration on the part of our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod would be to commend the many people, who have through the years made significant contributions toward the progress of this fine seminary, to the superabundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, with a view toward bringing about a recompense of reward befitting their needs, while, at the same time, enhancing the glory of Him, Whom to know is life eternal, and Whom to serve is the greatest of all privileges.

The people, who gave of themselves unstintingly to further the usefulness of this seminary to the Kingdom of Christ, did not work for earthly recognition or material reward. Their satisfaction lay in seeing this fine school to rise in the estimation of God's people in a measure approaching the regard which our God in heaven has had for it since its inception as a seminary of the Lutheran Church. An unbiased study of the records relating to the history of this school will establish the undeniable fact that God's people did little for many years to advance the interests of this step-child. Still God would not let it perish. It lived to see the day when interest in it turned upward and our church saw fit to give it the kind of support that would make growth and development possible. Therefore the commendation of Concordia Theological Seminary, of Springfield, Illinois, to God for further blessings and support on her one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary would very much be in order.