

11-1-1940

Address at the Opening of the School-Year in Concordia Seminary, St.Louis, Mo.

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Recommended Citation

Fuerbringer, L. (1940) "Address at the Opening of the School-Year in Concordia Seminary, St.Louis, Mo.," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 11 , Article 74.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol11/iss1/74>

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Concordia Theological Monthly

Vol. XI

NOVEMBER, 1940

No. 11

Address

Delivered at the Opening of the School-Year in Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., September 18, 1940

DEAR STUDENTS OF THE SEMINARY, RESPECTED MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY AND OF THE BOARD OF CONTROL, KIND FRIENDS OF OUR INSTITUTION:

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth." These words of the 121st Psalm come to my mind as I am about to speak the first word at the beginning of our new scholastic year, the 102d year in the history of our institution. I know of no better watchword for our students and for our instructors in these very serious and distressing times in the world, which affect also our Church and may affect our institution to a lesser or greater degree. Let us all make it a matter of our daily thought and prayer. Then we can also rest assured that the gracious promise contained in the same psalm will become true with us: "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even forevermore." And then we shall also be able to keep that equanimity and composure in these abnormal, critical, and exciting times which is our Christian duty and which is so necessary for the task set before us in this scholastic year.

What is that task? What should be our aim and goal? What should be *your* desire and purpose, my dear students—you who are now entering a new phase of your life and are beginning the study of theology and you who have been with us one or two years and are continuing or ending your theological studies as far as our Seminary is involved?

Permit me to call your attention to a word of St. Paul in the third chapter of his Letter to the Ephesians, a very brief word

and therefore easily to be remembered, but containing a wealth of thought. St. Paul, a bondman of Jesus Christ, a prisoner on account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in a beautiful prayer for his Christians at Ephesus, wishes them "to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," or as Luther has translated the words in the German Bible, to know, *dass Christum liebhaben viel besser ist denn alles Wissen*. He mentions two things, *knowledge* and *love of Christ*; he compares, as it were, these two things, and he exalts the love of Christ and places it above knowledge.

St. Paul knew of both things by experience; he knew of knowledge, and he knew of the love of Christ. He was a highly educated man and is also in this respect an example to those who would become ministers of the Gospel, highly educated in Hebrew and Greek wisdom and learning. In Hebrew wisdom Gamaliel of Jerusalem had been his teacher, perhaps the foremost scholar of that age in this particular field. With regard to his Greek learning, he was born and educated in Tarsus in Cilicia in Asia Minor, in those days a flourishing center of Greek wisdom and knowledge. His letters indicate to some extent his learning, as he readily quotes Greek poets, even such writers as were of less renown; his letters also indicate his mastery of style and his powerful rhetoric, so that one of the foremost Greek scholars of modern times, not a theologian, calls him the "classical writer of the Hellenistic age," "*der Klassiker des Hellenismus*" (Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff). His letters indicate that he is well acquainted with the philosophical trends of his time, and without entering into a more detailed discussion of his knowledge and of the ramified meaning of that term applied in his letters, suffice it to say that he uses the Greek words for knowledge and wisdom, *γνώσις* and *σοφία*, not less than 53 times in his letters.

But above all he knew and valued the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. And when he speaks of the love of Christ, he refers in general to that love which Christ has shown to mankind in His work of redemption, in His vicarious death for sinful, lost, and condemned humanity; and according to the context of our passage he refers especially to that incomprehensible and unlimited love of Christ shown in the founding, in the building, and in the conservation of the Church; that love of Christ which takes away the stony heart of man, gives a new heart and a new spirit, and kindles that love towards Christ which exclaims: "My Lord and my God, my Savior and my Redeemer!" And therefore St. Paul states in another passage: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him."

You, my young friends, are here in quest of knowledge, a beautiful thing. I do not know of anything human more inspiring than to see such a great number of young men striving after knowledge. If any one does not want to learn, our Seminary is not the place for him. You newcomers have up to the present time striven rather after general knowledge. Keep up this striving, continue in the quest for knowledge. But at the present time be earnest and conscientious in your quest for *theological* knowledge and make it a point to start in the proper way and frame of mind. You men of the second and third year, continue, I beg of you, faithfully in what you have begun. You Seniors were away for a year; most of you have done practical church-work, and I trust that you have been much benefited by it and have also learned that you still lack considerable knowledge. Keep up this quest after theological knowledge; keep it up also in the ministry; take time for it; be active and interested in every branch of your work; do not lose time; do not waste time, the most valuable temporal gift, but, according to St. Paul's exhortation in this very letter from which our passage is taken, ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν, redeem the time, *schicket euch in die Zeit*, literally, buy up the time, because the days are evil; and avoid as much as possible the multifarious activities, keep in our seminary life the extracurricular activities at a minimum. And then perhaps you will say as one of the scholars of modern times, an intimate friend of the fathers and founders of our Church (*Franz Delitzsch*), said when he was in his seventies: "I learn and see every day how little I know."

But above all things remember and learn to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. What does that imply and mean? Nothing merely emotional,—you will hear in the course of your studies more about emotional theology and religion, *Gefuehlstheologie*,—but it means love that proceeds from knowledge of, and faith in, Christ, of His person and of His redemptive work, as St. Paul explains: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Such love entails a personal relationship expressed in the words "Thou, O Lord, art mine and I am Thine."

I am Thine because Thou gavest
Life and blood For my good,
By Thy death me savest.
Thou art mine; I love and own Thee;
Ne'er shall I, Light of joy
From my heart dethrone Thee.

"Nearer, my God, to Thee; . . . nearer, O Christ, to Thee."

This is expected of you who are preparing for the ministry. For when St. Peter after his denial of Christ is recommissioned to

his office of feeding the lambs and sheep of Christ, the Master asks him three times: "Lovest thou Me?"

How is such love accomplished and attained? Let us eliminate and cast aside all human ideas and sentiments. The Lord Himself gives and creates such love through His Word. The Word of Christ and the love of Christ are closely related to each other, as the Lord Himself tells us: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." "If a man love me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." And such love will show itself in our daily life, in faithful performance of our daily tasks and duties and in shunning the love of the world and the things that are in the world, "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. . . . The world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

St. Paul closes one of his letters with the very earnest and weighty words "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema. Maranatha." Maranatha — our Bible does not translate this peculiar word. It was a familiar saying and greeting among the Christians of the apostolic days, meaning as much as, The Lord cometh, or, Lord, come. Maranatha! The Lord is coming! The things occurring today in this war-torn, war-mad world are, in the terms of Scripture, a coming of the Lord; they are, so to speak, the forerunners, the harbingers, of the final coming of the Lord. Let us begin our work, and continue with our work, believing and praying, Maranatha, and praying in the last words on the last page of our Bible: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen."

Before closing I should like to make a few announcements that must make us truly thankful to the Lord of the Church and the Giver of all good things. Our new dean-elect, the Reverend Richard A. Jesse, is with us, has already begun to perform the duties of his office, and will be formally installed in a special service in the near future. In the name of the Faculty, of the student-body, and of the Board of Control I bid him a most cordial welcome, and I am certain that all will join me in the wish and in the prayer that God, according to His grace, may bless him abundantly in his work and make him a blessing for our Church in general and for our institution in particular.

Since we have to instruct four classes this year, the Board of Directors of Synod has granted us the assistance of the Rev. Adolph T. Koehler as an instructor for the first semester. He is an alumnus of our Seminary, went to China in 1931 as a missionary of our Church, has taught at the seminary for native students in Hankow, and has not as yet been able to return to China. I bid

him a cordial welcome and assure him of our good wishes and prayers.

Our former dean, Dr. John H. C. Fritz, has now relinquished his office, which he filled in so efficient and faithful a manner for the past twenty years, and will devote all his time to his lecture work in the very important branch of Homiletics, the art of preaching. Once more we thank him for his most excellent service to our institution for so many years and bespeak for him God's blessing in his field of labor, which is already quite familiar to him.

Our Professor Frederick E. Mayer has rounded out twenty-five years in the service of our Church, first as pastor of churches in Central Illinois, then as instructor in our sister institution at Springfield, and for the last three years as professor of theology in our Seminary. We all rejoice that the Lord has blessed him so richly in his work, and we implore the Head of the Church that He will continue to bless him, and we say with David: "Thou blessest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed forever."

L. FUERBRINGER

Reason or Revelation?

(Concluded)

Satan's paramour is the mistress of a thousand wiles. We cannot conclude this study of the evils of rationalism without studying the more subtle methods by which Satan would beguile us and lead us away from the truth of Christ and the certainty of His Word. If he cannot get us to falsify the Word, he will aim to keep us from applying the Word, from exercising our faith, from putting our sole reliance on the teaching of Scripture and the promise of the Gospel.

One of the wiles which Satan's paramour employs to keep us away from the Word and to install herself as the mistress of theology is to exhibit herself as the defender of the truth of the Christian religion. Marshaling a great array of rational proofs for it and overstressing their value, she aims to win men for the idea that reason is superior to revelation. We are speaking of Christian apologetics and its abuse at the hands of Satan's paramour. Apologetics is a legitimate branch of Christian theology.¹⁾ It

1) We are not speaking of the illegitimate apologetics employed by the English deists, the old rationalists, and now by the Modernists for the purpose of demonstrating "the reasonableness of Christianity." We do not agree with Georgia Harkness's judgment "It merits high respect." (*The Faith by which the Church Lives*, p. 58.) Such apologetics serves no good purpose. Making Christianity "reasonable" is divesting it of its essential teachings. The doctrine of Christ is "reasonable" only if Christ is divested of His deity. "Resurrection" becomes "reasonable" only when it is denied.