

ROBERT DAVID PREUS

Pastor, Professor, President and Scholar

BORN: **OCTOBER 16, 1924** *St. Paul, Minn.*

DIED: **NOVEMBER 4, 1995** *Shorewood, Minn.*

THE NAME PREUS IS AN IMPORTANT ONE in the story of Norwegian Lutheranism in America. Because of Robert Preus and his brother, J.A.O. Preus II, it also became an important one in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. At first, Robert Preus intended to become a pastor in the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, but he changed his mind because false doctrine was tolerated at their seminary. He moved to the seminary of the “Little Norwegian Synod” (today’s Evangelical Lutheran Synod) and became its first graduate. For the next decade, he pastored congregations while continuing his education and even earning a doctorate in theology from the University of Edinburgh. Several years later, he earned a second one from the University of Strasbourg.

By 1957, Preus was an up-and-coming theological scholar. Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), called him to its faculty where he taught doctrinal theology for 17 years. This also placed him at the center of the Missouri Synod “civil war” that was brewing and then fought especially at CSL. There, Preus was an articulate defender of biblical doctrine that some of his colleagues were attacking. So, for example, he wrote, spoke and taught that the Bible was absolutely true and without error because God Himself had inspired it.

The synodical crisis climaxed in February 1974. Most of the students and faculty at CSL walked out to protest the disciplinary actions being taken. Preus and four other faculty remained, and Preus worked intensively to keep the seminary going, but now with a renewed commitment to the truths that the Missouri Synod had always stood for.

Some months later, Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Ill., called him to become its president. After just about a year, he led the seminary when

it moved to Fort Wayne. Under Preus, the seminary became well-known for its commitment to orthodox Lutheran doctrine and for reaching the unreached with the Gospel. Special programs were developed to train pastors from different ethnic groups and additional degree programs were developed beyond the Master of Divinity.

Preus was also active outside of the Missouri Synod. He was on the Committee on Bible Translation that oversaw the translation of the New International Version of the Bible, and he served on the Council of Biblical Inerrancy.

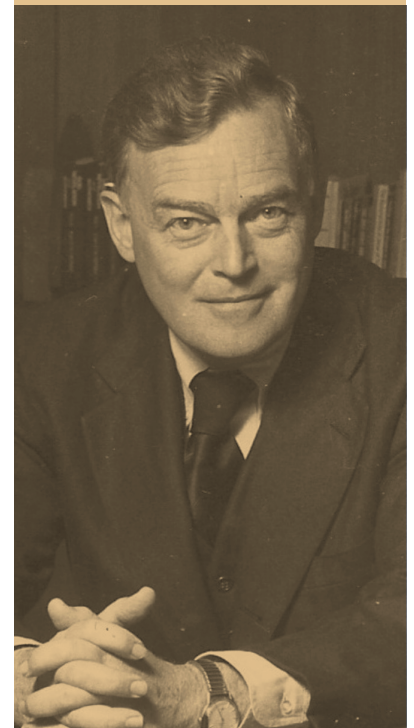
In 1989, the seminary’s Board of Regents decided to retire Preus in spite of his objections. This led to turmoil that did not subside until the 1992 convention restored Preus to the presidency for the next school year. He retired in 1993 and died two years later.

For more information about the 175th anniversary of the LCMS, visit lcms.org/175.

DISCOVER MORE

Robert D. Preus, *Getting into the Theology of Concord: A Study of the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977).

Klemet I. Preus, ed., *Doctrine Is Life: The Essays of Robert D. Preus on Justification and the Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006).



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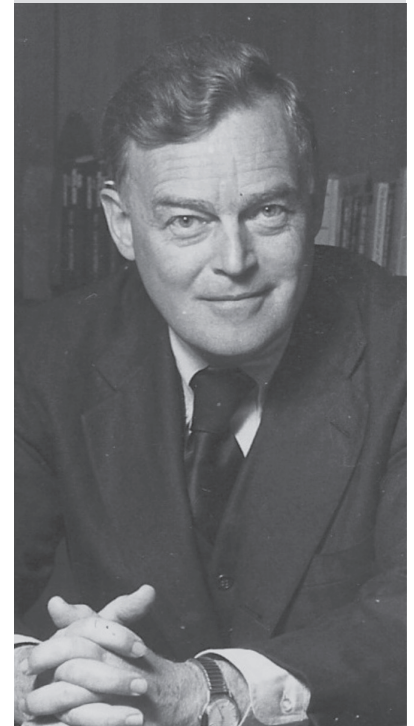
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