

12-1-1935

## Luther's Monumental Work: Galatians

R. T. Du Brau

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

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### Recommended Citation

Du Brau, R. T. (1935) "Luther's Monumental Work: Galatians," *Concordia Theological Monthly*: Vol. 6 , Article 103.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol6/iss1/103>

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Gibt es eine „natürliche Theologie“? (Jedermann sieht, was diese Frage auf dem Gebiet der Schöpfungsordnungen bedeutet. Daß diese Ordnungen auch außerhalb des Christentums noch etwas gelten, kommt von der natürlichen Gottesoffenbarung her.) Karl Barth verneint die Frage, und darauf geht W. Eiert in seiner Schrift „Karl Barths Index der verbotenen Bücher“<sup>8)</sup> ein (ohne die Sache der Schöpfungsordnungen weiter zu berücksichtigen). „Barth hat nun auch einen Index der verbotenen Bücher erlassen. Der Ursprung aller Ketzereien, ja die Ketzerei der Gegenwart schlechthin soll darin bestehen, daß Christen, sogar Theologen, neben das Buch der Heiligen Schrift das Buch der Natur, das Buch der Geschichte, das Buch der ‚geschichtlichen Stunde‘ legen und darin lesen.“ (S. 7.) Eiert weist nach, daß die Heilige Schrift uns anweist, auch auf das zu merken, was Gott uns in Natur und Geschichte sagt. Natürlich schöpft die christliche Theologie daraus nicht ihre Lehren. „Ja, wenn es sich darum handelt, vor welcher Autorität die kirchliche Dogmatik lebt und allein leben kann, dann stimmen wir für unsere Person allerdings Karl Barth rückhaltlos bei: das kann nur das Wort der Heiligen Schrift sein.“ (S. 10.) Aber in dieser Verbindung legt nun Eiert seinen Finger auf den Grundfehler der Barth'schen Theologie: sie ist nicht Schrifttheologie, sondern Schwärmererei. „Sie koordiniert das mit Christus identische Wort Gottes‘ mit dem Wort Gottes, das sich in der Verkündigung der Apostel und der Kirche an uns wendet.“ (S. 8. — Lutherischer ausgedrückt: mit dem Wort Gottes, das heißt, mit der Heiligen Schrift.) Ja, nachdem Eiert dargelegt hat, daß Wilhelm Herrmann weiter gegangen ist als selbst Ritschl (es fände sich nach Herrmann bei Ritschl noch zu viel „Schrift-treue“), erhebt er diese Anklage: „Karl Barth bekannte, bei Wilhelm Herrmann in die Schule gegangen zu sein.“ (S. 5; vgl. S. 16.)

Th. Engelder.

## Luthers Monumental Work: Galatians.

### I. Continuously in Use from 1535 to 1935.

In the year of our Lord 1535, four hundred years ago, Luther published his larger and final *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* after fifteen years of expounding Scripture in general and after an additional fifteen years of expounding *Epistola ad Galatas* in particular. Not the hasty effusion of a turbulent enthusiast, but rather the well-digested and well-prayed-over result of a generation of intense Bible-study, Luther's celebrated commentary proves that grand fundamental point of all Christian faith, the point the Re-

<sup>8)</sup> „Karl Barths Index der verbotenen Bücher.“ (Theologie Militans, Heft 2.) Von Werner Eiert. A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Leipzig. 1935. 22 Seiten 5x8. Preis: Broschiert, M. .60.



former had most at heart in all his labors, contests, and dangers — the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

This commentary, continuously republished since 1535, was the outcome of Luther's lectures on Galatians to his Wittenberg students, first from 1516 to 1519 and again from 1532 to 1535. His students took down the lecture notes and later published them in much the same manner in which our own Dr. Walther's lectures on the Law and Gospel were avidly preserved in note form by his erstwhile student hearers in St. Louis.

Luther himself prepared the first and earlier commentary for the printer. The first edition was dedicated to the president of the university, Peter Pupin, and to Carlstadt. It left the presses in the autumn of 1519. An abridged form of this same edition was printed in 1523.

The second series of lectures on Galatians waxed into a most voluminous commentary up to 1535. Then being reduced to print in both Latin and German, it became extensively used. We are indebted in no little measure to the zeal and industry of George Rorarius (Roerer), deacon of Wittenberg University, for this excellent and painstaking work. Roerer was a diligent churchman, who with the help of some of the academics wrote down what Luther said during his public lectures and then submitted what he had thus written to the inspection and criticism of the lecturer himself. Looking over these notes, Luther expressed his astonishment at the bulk to which his exposition of this short epistle had grown. He said:—

"I myself can hardly believe that I was so prolix as this volume represents me when I was expounding the epistle publicly. Yet I feel that all the thoughts which I find noted down with such diligence in this book are mine, so that I am forced to confess that all of it, and perhaps still more, was said by me in those public lectures."

He then wrote a preface to it, carefully revised the whole, and released the book for publication in 1535. This gives us another four-hundredth anniversary this year.

The commentary of 1535 is at least three times as large as the one published in 1519. It is Luther's most noteworthy single exegetical work as a university professor. Not a century has passed in which it has not been acclaimed his most important exegetic and dogmatic work. He himself held the Epistle to the Galatians in highest esteem, as he remarked in 1531: "*Epistola ad Galatas* is my own epistle. I am espoused to it. It is my Catherine de Bora."

## II. In the Language of the Angles and Saxons.

Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* was known in the English language comparatively soon after his death. An English translation appeared as early as 1575. The translators prefaced this volume



with a dedication "to all afflicted consciences which groan for salvation and wrestle under the cross for the kingdom of Christ." The then Bishop of London, afterwards Archbishop of York, Edwin Sandys, who during the great ritualistic controversy in England looked with disfavor upon the continued use of papal vestments, was an avid reader of Luther and furnished an enlightening preface to the commentary under date of April 28, 1575. (The full text of this preface has been published in *Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 66, p. 205 ff.)

The present senior professor at our St. Louis seminary has in his private collection "*A Commentarie of Master Doctor Martin Luther upon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Galathians*. First collected and gathered word by word out of his preaching and now out of Latine faithfully translated into English for the unlearned."

With the cumbersomeness customary to the age the elaborate title-page gives in the queer spelling of the day: "Wherein is set forth most excellently the glourious riches of God's grace, and the power of the Gospell, with the difference betweene the Law and the Gospell, and the strength of faith declared: to the joyfull comfort and confirmation of all true Christian beleivers, especially such as inwardly being afflicted and grieved in conscience, do hunger and thirst for justification in Christ Jesu. For whose cause most chiefly this Booke is translated and printed and dedicated to the same."

This interesting volume came from George Miller's print-shop in London, A. D. 1635. Handwritten notes and entries in Dr. Fuerbringer's copy show how the book was passed from hand to hand and read in turns by one family alone from 1655 to 1741.

It is most likely that a copy of this edition of 1635 fell into the hands of John Bunyan (1628—1688). Speaking of the tattered copy of Luther's commentary that came to his attention, the celebrated author of that most successful of all allegories and indispensable bit of our childhood's literary diet, *viz.*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, says: "It was so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn it over. I was pleased much that such an old book had fallen into my hands." From the great "age" of this book we may of course also deduce that a very early translation may have fallen into Bunyan's hands, or the book might have been read to shreds from making so many rounds of readers. Either theory can but be a credit to the book.

The next testimony as to English translations of the great commentary comes to us from Joseph Milner, the eloquent and thoroughly evangelical historian of the Church of England (1744—1797). He writes: "The only English translation of Luther's commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians which I have seen was the work of several pious persons. It has many defects, but is nevertheless a very useful performance. The book is scarce; and I cannot but observe



that a modern translation of both the editions of Luther's commentaries on this epistle, with a few judicious notes, would be a most valuable present to the Christian world."

Another edition in English appeared in London as late as 1888.

### III. Between the Atlantic and the Pacific.

In America, Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* was known and read about two generations before the Liberty Bell proclaimed freedom throughout all the land and the inhabitants thereof. The commentary, in English, was read diligently in the North Carolina border country of Virginia as early as 1740.

James Hunt, Samuel Morris, and two others, whose names are blurred from the records, were ardent readers of "Luther on the Galatians" in the privacy of their homes. They confessed that the book had brought them to a knowledge of their sins and to faith in Christ, their Savior. There must have been several copies of the book in circulation this side of the Atlantic as the one reader was ignorant of the experience of the other. It was not until both found themselves arrested for the same "offense" and thrown into the same dungeon that they also found themselves to be of the same mind.

It so happened that the spiritual court of His Majesty's (*Defensor Fidei*) crown colony of Virginia arraigned them for their late laxness in attending the Anglican services. The culprits, it was proved, had agreed to meet in their respective homes alternately each Sunday "in order to read the Scriptures and Luther's *Commentary on the Galatians*."

As the Anglican Church was the state church of Virginia at the time, they were repeatedly arrested and punished. But neither Hunt nor Morris wavered in their determination. In those days, readers of Luther's Galatians took their religious convictions seriously. Unfortunately there was no Lutheran pastor within reach or call who could have cared for the spiritual needs of these students of this commentary of Luther. Somewhat later an itinerant Presbyterian missionary reaped this early American harvest of souls, and thus Calvin conquered Luther.

Fourteen years later, in 1754, Muehlenberg and the Pennsylvania Synod sent an appeal to both London and Halle, stating: "Many thousands of Lutheran people are scattered through North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, etc."

With a grateful heart to God we note that since that early day those English colonies have become free and sovereign States in a nation that cherishes religious liberty as its most precious possession. The principles so tersely stated in Luther's *Commentary on Galatians* have the power to help us preserve this possession. Need-



less to say, during the ensuing years of our national development, with its increasing church-life and expansion, several editions of Luther's commentary have been issued from American printing-presses, and in the language of the country. In 1891 Philadelphia gave birth to one, and the latest of these issued from a Michigan publishing house in 1932, incidentally another instance of Luther's traveling westward.

But Luther does not only speak Latin and English in this commentary. A Spanish translation of the earlier commentary appeared as early as 1520 and found its way into the Spanish Americas. This was five years before even a German version was published. The later and more voluminous commentary of 1535 appeared in a French translation as early as 1583 and became a foundation-stone for the French Protestant Church.

Sequoia National Park, Cal.

R. T. DU BRAU.

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### Der Höhepunkt des Kirchenkampfes.

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#### A.

Wir müssen den Faden der Geschehnisse wieder aufnehmen. Mit jener freien reformierten Synode, von der in früheren Artikeln dieser Serie die Rede war, war der Weg in die Gemeinden gefunden. Es folgte eine Reihe von Bekenntnissynoden auch in sogenannten lutherischen Gebieten. Aber es ist merkwürdig: Das Gute, was auf jener reformierten Synode gesagt worden war, wurde nirgends übertroffen, und der gefährliche reformierte unionistische Einschlag war anderwärts ebenfalls vorhanden — ein Beweis, daß die Führung bei der Zerfahrenheit des volksthümlichen Luthertums auf die Reformierten übergegangen ist.

Da tagte am 18. und 19. Februar 1934 in Düsseldorf im vorwiegend reformierten Teil der preussischen Union die Freie Evangelische Synode im Rheinland, schon unter bedeutender Laienbeteiligung. Lic. D. Beckmann, Düsseldorf, schlug den uns aus den Äußerungen der Synoden auf jener reformierten Synode bekannten Bekennterton an in einem Vortrag „Reformatorisches Bekenntnis heute“. Das von uns ausführlich erörterte Barmener Referat Prof. D. Warths bildete auch hier das gegen die Deutschen Christen auf den Schild erhobene theologische Bekenntnis.

Am 7. März 1934 fanden sich Abgesandte aus den bekennnistreuen — wie sie sich jetzt nannten — Gemeinden Berlins und der Mark (von jedem Kirchenkreis zwei Pfarrer und vier Laien, zusammen etwa vierhundert Männer und vierzig Frauen) zu einer Freien Evangelischen Synode in Berlin und Brandenburg in Berlin-Dahlem zusammen. Lic. D. Beckmann wiederholte seinen Vortrag. Prof. Karl Warth's Barmener Erklärung wurde auch wieder vorgetragen. Der be-