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## Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

### LUTHER ON MARRIAGE

In *Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie* (Vol. 23, 1954, pp. 335 ff.) Professor Erdmann Schott of Halle submits a summary of Luther's views on marriage. He rejects the interpretation that Luther believed man to be utterly incapable of controlling the sex urge, that Luther was an exponent of sexual license, that, for this reason, Luther disapproved of celibacy and asceticism, and that, in general, Luther failed to develop a coherent and consistent view of marriage.

The author reviews Luther's views on marriage as found in the Large Catechism in the exposition of the Sixth Commandment. Here Luther stresses that marriage is a divinely instituted order which men should respect and honor. It is not a sacrament in the Roman Catholic sense and therefore does not make the authority of the church the exclusive court of decision. It is, furthermore, the one institution in which God permits individuals of opposite sex to become one flesh. Yet a chaste marriage is only that in which also the hearts of husband and wife are united in true love and forbearance. The author, finally, shows that Luther was well aware of many problems arising in marriage, but that he believed that no system of political and canon laws could resolve all these problems, but that these must be solved by the individual's readiness to be guided by the Spirit of God and by the dictates of his sanctified conscience.

Perhaps a renewed consideration of what Luther has to say on marriage in the Large Catechism might prove more profitable than a pre-occupation with wholly secular views on marriage as these are presented in current popular and semipopular literature. P. M. B.

### METHODISTS CANCEL FERRE LECTURES

The *Christian Century* (August 24, 1955), under this heading, reports that Professor Nels F. S. Ferré, now teaching theology at Vanderbilt, a Methodist seminary, had been invited last fall by the Methodist Southeastern Jurisdiction to give the morning Bible talks at the summer assembly which this jurisdiction annually holds at Lake Junaluska, N. C. When afterwards he had come under fire for "allegedly unsound views on the Virgin Birth," the executive committee of the assembly, with five of the eight bishops in the Jurisdiction

present, canceled the invitation. This action was unanimously upheld by the board of trustees of the assembly, but the denominational authorities suppressed news of what had been done. The *Christian Century* reproves the Southeastern Methodists both for their excursion into heresy-hunting and for their attempt to keep the facts hidden. In its criticism the *Christian Century* says, among other things, that to "those familiar with Dr. Ferré's theology—and by this time he has written enough books and articles so that [this] should include most churchmen—an attack on him of this nature borders on the ridiculous, for probably no other front-rank American theologian today puts equal stress on the centrality of the Incarnation in the Christian revelation. However, Dr. Ferré is coming to be much the sort of fundamentalist bogey that Harry Emerson Fosdick was a generation ago, and for equally spurious reasons." By placing Dr. Ferré side by side with Dr. Fosdick, the editorial indirectly suggests why the former is becoming a "fundamentalist bogey," if that really is the case; for, like Fosdick, Ferré uses the traditional theology of the church with a different connotation. When he, for example, stresses the centrality of the Incarnation, that is not done in the sense of the historical Christian creeds. That fact the editorial should have added.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

"BUT ALL THIS IS IN OUTWARD APPEARANCE ONLY"

Our attention was called to these words of Luther by a picture and news article in *Time* (August 29, 1955). The picture showed the Marquis and Marquise de Vogüé walking in the French village Oizon on "Assumption Day" (celebrated by Romanists on August 15 in honor of Mary's supposed bodily assumption into heaven after her death) with their hands clasped, the marquis going before his wife and both following the village priest, while villagers watched the procession with rapt admiration. The rich and influential marquis, 63, and his financially very competent wife, 58, were on their way to forsake the world and dedicate themselves to God, he as a Benedictine monk and she as a member of the "Little Sisters of the Ascension." Soon the fastidious marquis would have his well-groomed head shaved and don the cowl of a monk to till the land with his brother monks, eat the simplest of foods, and rise at night to chant the office. The Marquise de Vogüé was about to forget her lavish Dior gowns and nurse the sick and aid the poor in the slums of Paris. They had bidden each other good-by, never to see each other again. Their castle and

other possessions had been given to four of their five children, their fifth having become a Benedictine monk. The couple had been married thirty-five years but decided to forsake the world as soon as their youngest son was married, which happened recently. The news item graphically shows the radical difference between the points of view of sanctification as represented by Romanism and Lutheranism. To the Romanist sanctification is the way to justification; to the Lutheran sanctification is the fruit of justification. Luther writes: "Whoever would do good works must begin not with works, but with the person who is to do the works. But the person cannot be made good except through faith. Works make a person saintly before men. But all this is in outward appearance only." (WA VII, 32 f.)

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### A BIBLE REVISION BY THE WISCONSIN SYNOD

The Wisconsin Synod at its 1953 convention resolved to publish a new Bible translation or rather a conservative revision of the Authorized Version. The *Quartalschrift* (July 1955) offers a "trial translation" of the first chapter of Galatians. It endeavors not only to do away with the outmoded expressions of four centuries ago, such as "which" for "who," "unto" for "to," and the like, substituting for them the modern idioms, but also to supply more adequate translations of the Greek words where, in the opinion of the revisers, the Authorized Version is faulty. It is hardly fair to judge the whole revision by the few changes made in one chapter. In many cases the revisions parallel those of the RSV, while in some instances they depart far more from the AV than do the changes in the RSV. In Gal. 1:6 the Wisconsin Synod revision puts for the "I marvel" of the AV, "I cannot understand," while the RSV has "I am astonished." For "do I now persuade" (v. 10) of the AV, the WSV has "am I now seeking the approval of" and the RSV "am I now seeking the favor of." The new venture in Bible revision is most interesting, but it shows how difficult it is to produce a translation of Scripture that is in every way an improvement of the revisions of the AV that have been furnished in the past. Still this observation should not discourage our brethren in their venture. If within the tradition of English Bible translation they can give the Christian Bible student something better than he has now, he will be very grateful to the Wisconsin Synod revisers, who meanwhile are inviting comments on their work presented in their *Theological Quarterly*.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

## BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

*Cleveland.*—An official of the National Lutheran Council called upon the churches to make "a determined and courageous effort to speed up the process of racial integration." Dr. Robert E. van Deusen, the Council's Washington secretary, said such an effort would give the Christian world mission new stature. He addressed here the triennial convention of the Women's Missionary Society, United Lutheran Church in America.

"The tragedy is that in the realm of [race relations] practice, it has been other groups that have led the way," Dr. van Deusen said. "Labor, business, sports, entertainment, government, have done the pioneering. Court decisions have outrun the Christian conscience in extending equal right to Negroes."

The Lutheran official said a factor in the growing antagonism to Western missionaries in Asia and Africa has been "the knowledge that in many churches in the United States dark-skinned people are not welcome."

"If all excuses and defenses were dropped," he said, "and people, as people, without regard to color, were made welcome in our pulpits, in our pews, at our Communion table, on our church membership rolls, in our Sunday schools, in our women's missionary societies, the effect would be terrific.

"Christian leaders in the younger churches of Asia and Africa could stop apologizing for their Western colleagues and the Christian world mission would take on new stature."

Dr. van Deusen emphasized that the teachings of Christianity have made a "major contribution" to the general spread of "the idea of racial brotherhood."

*Denver.*—The Colorado Supreme Court ruled here that civil courts have no authority to inquire into ecclesiastical, spiritual, or doctrinal questions of a church or independent religious congregation. For that reason it took a hands-off attitude toward an attempt by a minority group of First Baptist Church, Fort Collins, Colo., to enjoin the majority of the congregation from changing its affiliation from the American Baptist Convention to the Conservative Baptist Association of America.

Courts should not be resorted to in such controversies, the high tribunal said. The opinion, written by Justice E. V. Holland, affirmed a decision of the Larimer County district court denying the minority's request for an injunction. The injunction was first sought by the minority in April 1950. The congregation voted, 155—56, for the

change in affiliation at a special meeting in March 1948, called to consider the American Baptist Convention's alleged trend toward "modernism."

Justice Holland wrote that the Fort Collins church "is beyond question a self-governing and independent religious congregation, and the question here presented is purely ecclesiastical and a matter over which courts neither assume nor exercise jurisdiction." "According to their view of proper regulation of their church affairs," he stated, "the majority disaffiliated from the convention (American Baptist Convention), which as a free and democratic body they had a right to do."

"Courts cannot and should not interfere with the internal regulation of such an independent body. . . . Settlement of matters in connection with the internal regulation of the organization is a matter for the membership to determine and is absolutely essential to freedom of action in religious matters."

*Washington, D. C.* — The 800th anniversary of the (Lutheran State) Church of Finland was observed with a service of prayer and thanksgiving at the Washington Cathedral (Protestant Episcopal) here.

Finnish Ambassador John Nykopp read the Scripture lesson as nine Lutheran pastors, representing seven different synods, took part in the service. Dean Francis B. Sayre, Jr., and Canon Luther Deck Miller of the cathedral also participated. Other participants included Dr. Stewart W. Herman of the National Lutheran Council; Dr. Frederick E. Reissig, executive secretary of the Washington Federation of Churches; Dr. Bernhard Hillilla, vice-president of the Suomi (Finnish) Synod of America; and Dr. F. Epling Reinartz, secretary of the United Lutheran Church in America.

Dr. T. A. Kantonen, professor at Hamma Divinity School, Springfield, Ohio, preached the sermon. He recalled how the Finnish Church was founded by Bishop Henry, an English-born member of the Franciscan order, who came to Finland in 1155 as a missionary. Bishop Henry was martyred soon thereafter. Dr. Kantonen said that since the early period of the Reformation the Finnish Church has been one of the strongest Lutheran churches in the world. More than 100 Lutheran pastors of the Washington area marched in the processional and recessional at the service.

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NEWS BUREAU OF THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

*Philadelphia.* — Publication of an English edition of the writings of Martin Luther that will require 55 volumes and 15 years to complete is being launched this fall. It will be known as "Luther's Works."

Plans for the project to produce the most comprehensive collection of the Protestant Reformation leader's writings ever published in English were reported here at the 43d annual convention of the Lutheran Editors' and Managers' Association, September 21—22.

Co-operating in the project are the United Lutheran Publication House and Muhlenberg Press of Philadelphia, operated by the United Lutheran Church in America, and Concordia Publishing House of St. Louis, Mo., conducted by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Concordia will issue 30 of the volumes and Muhlenberg 24, with Vol. 55 a general index to the entire edition. Those published by Concordia will cover Luther's Bible commentaries and those by Muhlenberg his sermons, letters, tracts, and table talks. A uniform size and binding will be used by both houses so the edition will be a set.

The initial volume will be published by Concordia on October 31. It will be the first of three devoted to Luther's commentaries on the Psalms and will be No. 12 in the series. Concordia will also issue two volumes next year, while the first from the Muhlenberg Press will be published in the spring of 1957. It is planned to average four volumes annually, two from each house, until the project is completed in 1970.

Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan of the University of Chicago Divinity School is directing the translation of the Concordia volumes, and Dr. Helmut T. Lehmann, book editor of the Muhlenberg Press, is editor of the U. L. P. H. translations.

In a talk to the Lutheran editors, Dr. Lehmann stressed that the translations "are intended to speak good, idiomatic, modern English, to strive to do to Luther what he thought should be done in a translation."

Pointing out that a large part of Luther's writings have been closed to thousands because of the language barrier, Dr. Lehmann said that "Luther's deep insight into sacred Scripture, his pen probing into practically every significant aspect of human endeavor, is after more than 400 years being made available to the American public in modern English."

Previously, Muhlenberg published a six-volume English edition of writings by Luther, the first of which appeared in 1915. Earlier, Concordia issued a 23-volume edition of Luther's works in German.