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Theology and Love

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Theology and Love

Two customs of thought have tended to erect, if not a barrier, at least a filter between theology and Christian life.

The one is the hoary distinction between the "doctrinal" and the "practical" portions of the epistles—as though the apostles were "teaching" less strenuously when they were shaping the life and behavior of their readers than when they were discussing their faith. The other is the theologically more recent distinction between *kerygma* and *didache* and the assumption that when a preacher wants to save people, he tells them about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; when he wants them to behave as Christians, he tells them to behave as Christians.

The New Testament thoroughly erases these poles and contrasts, as a glance at Titus 2:11-14, Acts 5:42 or 15:35 will suggest. Preaching and teaching are two methods, usually conjoined, for promoting the same cause, namely, the life in Christ Jesus; they both go on toward people who are being brought to conversion and toward people who are being nurtured in the Christian life.

For there is one and the same message that is necessary to promote both the Christian faith in the heart and the Christian behavior in actions, and that is the Word of God's redeeming act in Christ.

Werner Elert's *Das christliche Ethos*, published in English by Muhlenberg in 1957, with its stout simplification of the contrast between Law and Gospel on the basis of massive Luther research, is doing much to restore the connection between the doctrine of the Gospel and the behavior of the Christian. Joseph Sittler's brief and compelling monographs—*The Structure of Christian Ethics* is reviewed in these pages—help to sound the tocsin.

In this issue we welcome the careful study on "Luther and Sanctification" by Philip S. Watson. Muhlenberg published Watson's *Let God Be God* in 1950—a summary of Luther's "theology

proper" remarkable for its incisiveness and for the fact that it was the product of a British Methodist, who gently straightened out John Wesley's record on Luther in a number of instances. The present essay traverses its field with ample documentation and arrives at the conclusion that justification and sanctification for Luther are not compartments of thought hermetically sealed off from each other but rather two sides of one and the same action of God. The effort to discern with precision what the Scriptures and Luther meant by "righteousness" will still go on. At this point we are grateful for the new broadside of research on this vital topic and welcome the Briton to our columns.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

STEWARDS OF GOD

In the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (December 1958) Dr. John Reumann of the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, describes very interestingly the "pre-Christian religious application of *oikonomos* in Greek." The term is found in the New Testament in such passages as 1 Cor. 4:1, 2; 1 Peter 4:10; Titus 1:7 and always has a definite meaning, which, generally speaking, is similar to that in pre-Christian usage. Thus an inscription found at Ephesus and dated 302 B. C. speaks of a city treasurer, or *oikonomos*, whose task it was on certain state occasions, together with the priests and priestesses, "to offer sacrifice also to Artemis for the good news (*euaggelia*) brought by a visiting benefactor." Another inscription, found at Magnesia-on-the-Maeander, dated about the second century B. C., speaks of a college of *oikonomoi* carrying out certain cult duties as, for example, buying a bull for sacrifice and joining with other city officials in prayer at the sacrifice. In Ptolemaic Egypt several inscriptions from the early first century B. C. show how the *oikonomos sitikoon*, "the steward of the grain supplies," makes an annual (sacrificial) gift of wheat for himself, the administration, and King Ptolemy. "In all these instances," the writer comments, "a government official called an *oikonomos* carries out some duty related to religion." He concludes his article with the remark: "The NT thus applies to Christians and their leaders a term that was 'in the air,' *oikonomos*, and follows pagan precedent in its application." This, of course, is true also of other words in pagan use which the apostle employs to impress upon his readers those lessons which he meant to teach them. The case of *oikonomos*, which is here discussed, while not new, is indeed illustrative.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER