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## Theological Observer

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# THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

## THE JUSTIFICATION OF A SINNER BEFORE GOD

Under this heading the *Scottish Journal of Theology* (September 1960) publishes an excellent article on the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* by Prof. Robert Preus of Concordia Seminary, with special consideration of the doctrine "as taught in later Lutheran Orthodoxy." Dr. Preus reaches the conclusion that "with the forensic justification, with the *iustitia aliena*, with the strong emphasis on the validity and reality of the imputation, we have the basic elements of Lutheran Orthodoxy's doctrine of justification. And if the terminology has changed, the main strands and emphasis of the Reformation teaching remain intact." When the writer here speaks of a change of terminology by the later dogmatists, he has in mind such expressions of Luther, and occasionally of the Lutheran Confessions, that justification is a divine act by which God *makes* (italics our own) an unrighteous man righteous. Against their Roman Catholic opponents the later Lutheran dogmatists, above all, Quenstedt, whom Dr. Preus quotes frequently, refrained from such expressions, because by them the Romanists might justify their erroneous teaching of justification by inherent righteousness. Quenstedt thus writes: "Those to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed are truly righteous, although not inherently or by inherence, but imputatively and through an extrinsic designation that they are such. . . . He who is regarded by God as righteous is truly righteous." We warmly recommend the article for wide and careful perusal, since it stresses important truths which at this time of widespread loose and confused theological presentation should be heeded. By the way, when Luther uses the phrase *gerecht machen*, he uses it quite commonly against the background of his basic

doctrine that justification is a forensic act, which means that God declares a sinner righteous for Jesus' sake and thus makes him righteous.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

## THE SCOTS CONFESSION OF 1560

*Theology Today* (October 1960), under this heading, presents an interesting analysis of the Scottish confession of faith which the "Reformation Parliament," upon the suggestion of John Knox and his colleagues, adopted on Aug. 17, 1560, and which, though superseded in 1647 by the Westminster Confession, never ceased, as the writer states, to hold an honored place in the thought of Scottish Presbyterians. Our interest attached especially to the "doctrine of secular authority," stated in Article XXIV, "Of the Civil Magistrate." We quote in part the writer's analysis:

For all who know even a little of the subsequent history of Scotland and the Scottish Church there is something distinctly pathetic about this paragraph. "We farther confess and acknowledge, that such persons as are placed in authority are to be loved, honoured, feared, and holden in most reverent estimation": Knox and his successors found it hard to repeat such words in connection with Mary Queen of Scots, her son, or indeed any of the Stewart line. "Moreover, to Kings, Princes, Rulers and Magistrates, we affirm that chiefly and most principally the conservation and purgation of the Religion appertains; so that not only they are appointed for civil policy, but also for maintenance of the true religion and for suppressing of idolatry and superstition whatsoever." The hope behind this affirmation was quickly disappointed. Indeed, we may suspect that the ink was hardly dry upon this page of the Confession when zealous Protestants were tempted to seek a loophole in it for rebellion and to concentrate their attention almost exclusively upon one promising phrase: "Such as resist the supreme power, doing that which appertains to his charge,



do resist God's ordinance." What, they asked, if the magistrate fail to do "that which appertains to his charge," or impede others seeking to do that which appertains to theirs? Out of their disillusion and questioning there developed a long and bitter struggle between Church and State in Scotland. But that sorrowful struggle should not blind us to the great truth embodied in Article XXIV of the Confession . . . that the State has a service to render to God. In saying this we think at once of Karl Barth, who has had so many valuable things to say on the relations of Church and State for more than a quarter of a century. . . . But if we think of Barth, we think also of Calvin, for the doctrine of the Confession is indistinguishable here from the doctrine of the *Institutes*. And if we think of Calvin we think also of Paul, to whose teaching in Romans 13 the Scots Reformers are undeniably indebted.

The writer contends that also in its doctrine of "the Magistrate" the Scots Confession is founded on Scripture and stands or falls with it. But while in Romans 13 the apostle commands subjection to the higher powers as an ordinance of God and declares that the ruler is the minister of God to thee for good, he does not say that to kings, princes, rulers, and magistrates appertain chiefly and most principally the conservation and the purgation of religion and that they are appointed also for maintenance of the true religion and for suppressing of idolatry and all superstition. JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM THE NATIONAL LUTHERAN COUNCIL

*St. Louis, Mo.* — Representatives of the National Lutheran Council and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod resumed formal conversations here on theological issues involved in Lutheran co-operative activities.

Discussion at the second meeting of the two groups, held at the Missouri Athletic Club, Nov. 18—19, centered in "The Significance of Confessional Subscription," dealing with the traditional adherence of Lu-

theran churches to the doctrinal statements contained in the *Book of Concord*.

As was the case at the initial session of the church leaders in Chicago last July 7—9, the exploratory talks here dwelt on theological considerations underlying present and future relations between the NLC and the Missouri Synod.

Participants in the closed conference focused major attention on the way in which the various Lutheran church bodies in America adhere to the Lutheran Confessions as a correct exposition of the Word of God.

Included in this concern was the varying emphasis which the bodies place upon the confessions and the degree to which they require their pastors to accept these writings as the basis of their ministry.

Following nearly six hours of discussion, in an afternoon and a morning session, the 29 conferees issued a prepared statement which said:

"Substantial agreement was reached with reference to (1) designation of the confessions which are involved in subscription; (2) assertion of historical limitations in the confessions; (3) allowance of distinction between the primary norm of the Scriptures and the secondary norm of the confessions; (4) recognition that the heart of the confessions is their witness to the Gospel; (5) acknowledgment that this understanding of the Gospel requires rejection of contradictory understandings; and (6) affirmation of the importance of confessional subscription for the proclamation of the church."

Since there was "substantial agreement on the significance and nature of confessional subscription," the two groups reported that further talks between the NLC and the Missouri Synod are being planned. The third meeting has been tentatively set for next Aug. 1 and 2 in Chicago.

Scheduled for discussion at the meeting in Chicago is the general topic "What kind of co-operation is possible in view of the



discussions to date?" Areas to be considered will include the relation of co-operation to confessional agreement, the relation of witness to co-operation; and the extent of co-operation apart from pulpit and altar fellowship.

Approval was given to publication of the four essays which were read at the first two meetings. The papers dealing with "The Unity of the Gospel" and "The Significance of Confessional Subscription" will be distributed to every Lutheran pastor in America and will also be made available to the public.

Essayists who presented papers on the Lutheran Confessions at the meeting here were, for the NLC, Dr. Theodore G. Tappert, professor of church history at Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pa., and for the Missouri Synod, Prof. Herbert J. A. Bouman, professor of systematics at Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis.

Need for restudy of confessional subscription by the NLC-Missouri Synod conferees was acknowledged at their first session. According to the official minutes of the meeting, both groups stressed "the importance of avoiding caricatures of the positions and practices of various Lutheran bodies" on the question of their loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions.

Discussion at the first meeting last July was based on Article VII of the Augsburg Confession. Dealing with church unity, the article declares in part: "And to the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments."

Essays on this subject were presented by Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, president of Augustana College at Rock Island, Ill., for the NLC, and Dr. Martin H. Franzmann of Concordia Seminary at St. Louis, for the Missouri Synod.

"The *rapprochement* at both meetings has been an encouragement to future Lutheran relations in the United States," said a spokes-

man for the nine Lutheran bodies represented at the sessions.

Present at the meeting were Dr. Paul C. Empie, executive director of the NLC, who was stricken with a heart attack during the first session of the two groups last July. Dr. Empie has made rapid progress toward recovery and returned to his duties on a part-time basis in mid-September.

Also in attendance from the council were Dr. Norman A. Menter of Berkley, Mich., its president, and Dr. David Granskou, secretary of its Department of Theological Co-operation in the Division of Lutheran World Federation Affairs.

Other members of the NLC's executive committee present, in addition to Dr. Menter, were the presidents of the council's eight participating bodies: Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, New York, United Lutheran Church in America; Dr. Fredrik A. Schiotz, Evangelical Lutheran Church; Dr. Malvin H. Lundeen, Augustana Lutheran Church; Dr. William Larsen, United Evangelical Lutheran Church; and Dr. John M. Stensvaag, Lutheran Free Church, all of Minneapolis; Dr. Henry F. Schuh, Columbus, Ohio, American Lutheran Church; Dr. Raymond Wargelin, Hancock, Mich., Suomi Synod; and Dr. Alfred Jensen, Des Moines, Iowa, American Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The executive committee was also represented by Dr. Frank K. Eford, Salisbury, N.C.; Dr. Donald R. Heiges, Chicago; Dr. Raymond Olson, Minneapolis; Mr. Harold Levander, St. Paul, Minn.; and Dr. F. Eppling Reinartz, New York.

The NLC's consulting theologians were Dr. Bergendoff and Dr. Tappert; Dr. Edward C. Fendt, president of Evangelical Lutheran Theological Seminary, Columbus, Ohio; Dr. Alvin Rogness, president of Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; and Dr. Walter Kukkonen of the Suomi Synod's faculty at Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, Maywood, Ill.



Representing the Missouri Synod were Dr. John W. Behnken, its president, Dr. George W. Wittmer, third vice-president, and Dr. Lawrence B. Meyer, planning counselor, all of St. Louis.

Also, Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer, president of Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis; Dr. Franzmann and Dr. Bouman, both of that seminary faculty; Dr. George Beto, president of Concordia Theological Seminary at Springfield, Ill.; and the Rev. Theodore F. Nickel, president of the Northern Illinois District and pastor of Jehovah Lutheran Church, Chicago.

*New York.*—Irving C. Pearson, a 40-year-old Montana lawyer and Lutheran layman, has been appointed director of Taiwan Church World Service, the relief and service agency of Protestant churches and missions in Taiwan. He was named to the post by both Lutheran World Relief and Church World Service, relief agencies co-operating in the shipment of substantial quantities of food, clothing, and medicine to Taiwan.

Mr. Pearson succeeds Barry Schuttler, who has been director of the program for the last two years. The new director will supervise a program that reaches some 1,800,000 people. Distribution of about 30,000 tons of relief materials sent annually by LWR and CWS is through congregational committees, institutions, feeding stations, and schools.

Taiwan is the only area in the world where a co-operative Protestant-Roman Catholic food program is in operation. Agencies of the two faiths distribute to the same people on alternate months.

Mr. Pearson, a member of the Augustana Lutheran Church, and his wife and three children—Andrew, 7, Jeffrey, 5, and Nancy, 3—left their Anaconda, Mont., home late in November and were scheduled to sail from San Francisco on Dec. 2 aboard the *Gopher State*.

The new relief director, who said he accepted the appointment after he and his wife decided to "do something about serving the

church instead of just talking about it," has been in private law practice in Anaconda since 1951 and has been part owner of a real estate and insurance agency.

*Copenhagen.*—The road to Christian unity is a "road back"—but it is back to Christ and not back to Rome, the Lutheran World Federation's Commission on Inter-confessional Research was told here. Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger of Munich, Germany, chairman of the commission, declared that Biblical allusion to one flock under one shepherd referred only to Christ Himself and not to the pope.

Martin Luther's work as a church reformer was begun with an ecumenical perspective, said Dr. Dietzfelbinger, whose 2,500,000-member Bavarian Evangelical Lutheran Church is situated in the most Roman Catholic part of Germany. But, he added, Luther's ecumenical goal was "Back to Christ alone, to the Holy Scriptures, to faith and truth."

He contrasted this position with that of the Roman Church which, Bishop Dietzfelbinger said, "demands distinctly, plainly and clearly the return to Rome" as the basis of Christian unity. "It refuses to acknowledge that it, too, can be at fault and commit errors."

While taking account of present contacts between Rome and non-Catholic churches and noting that the hopes of even Catholics had been raised by the papal announcement that an "ecumenical council" would be held, he commented, "But meanwhile it has become quite clear that Rome understands 'ecumenical' only in the sense of Roman Catholic."

Christian unity must not be an end in itself, nor must it be sought out of human enthusiasm, the German churchman asserted. "The one church must be a community in Christ as the only Savior of the World." He reiterated that for followers of the Reformation the ecumenical road is "not return to Rome but only a return of all of us to Christ alone."