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Sexual Ethics in Present-Day Germany.

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Innumerable times in the history of men and nations the intimate relation of Christian ethics to Christian faith has been shown to be exactly as Scripture describes it. As a person believes, so he thinks, purposes, speaks, and acts. In the wake of the decay of Christian teaching has ever followed decay of Christian living. As a rule, it has been the domain of sexual affairs where the deleterious effects of apostasy from the divine norm for pure doctrine and holy living have appeared first. The classical passage which exhibits the operation of cause and effect in this respect under the permissive dispensation and the retributive justice of the God of holiness, is Rom. 1, 21—32. In the terrible panorama of pagan corruption which the apostle spreads before our eyes in this passage, the prurient subject of the unnatural sexual desires and practises is not passed over, but made quite prominent, even by a writer who otherwise considered it "a shame even to speak of those things which are done in secret,"¹⁾ and who laid down the rule for his congregations that certain matters should "not be once named among them, as becometh saints."²⁾ There is dire necessity at times to speak of loathsome subjects: to point out, for instance, that the law of compensation, which the righteous Creator has wrought into the order of the universe, and chiefly into the original character of His foremost creature, man, avenges defection from the truth of the divine revelation upon the sexual relationship of the renegades. Accordingly, Paul does not hesitate to write to the Christians in the capital city of the world, who were daily witnessing the things which he mentioned: "Because, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing

1) Eph. 5, 12.

2) Eph. 5, 3.

THE THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER.

The Ohio Synod. — In the *Lutheran Standard* for February 18 Rév. C. E. Clessler writes on "Courtesies We Owe Our Fellow-Pastors as Christian Gentlemen, as Pastors of Their Congregations, and as Members of the Same Synodical Body." In the last section of this paper occur the following words: "Brother, how would you feel if you would be doing everything in your power to uphold Synod's position, and then have a brother minister of the same Synod in the neighborhood to whom your half-hearted and weak members would point and say: 'That preacher over there is not so strict in his practise as ours'?" This warning may deserve to be pondered also beyond the confines of the Ohio Synod. —

In the *Lutheran Standard* (March 4) C. W. P. writes on "The Mote and the Beam," pleading for that merciful spirit which will lovingly correct an erring brother. In the course of his remarks the writer says: —

21) Mark 8, 38. — The publication of this article was delayed during the author's absence in Europe. It is the article that had been promised as a sequel to the article on "Withdrawal from the Church in Germany," THEOL. MONTHLY I, 193.

“Other synods have the Holy Spirit as well as we. Why, then, should they not be able to teach us some things in the way of applying Lutheranism to life?”
D.

The Swedish Lutherans. — Writing in the *Lutheran Companion* (February 25) on “Our Churches and the Common Cause,” the editor says that two leading pastors have voiced to him their opinion on the question: “Do We Need Another Authority?” He continues: “The question was this: ‘How are we to get all the churches to do their best for all the causes we have in common?’ One good brother in the Minnesota Conference writes: ‘It would appear that you consider this a problem difficult of solution. You may be right. Permit me to offer the following in answer to your question: By giving our congregations a voice regarding work to be done.’ Then he goes on to say: ‘Just now I don’t have time to enter into a lengthy discussion of what is implied in my answer. Briefly it is this: Frequently large undertakings are sprung upon the delegates at a meeting. They have no advance knowledge of them or the stand their respective congregations would take relative to them. How, then, can they act intelligently for the congregations they represent? I humbly believe there should be a system of referendum. The congregations should be given a chance to express themselves. Under our present system our churches have mighty little to say, because the opportunity is not provided them.’”

In the same issue the decision of Judge Philbrook of Connecticut on the question, “What Is Liberty?” is reported as follows: “In a recent decision of Judge Philbrook of Connecticut he says: ‘The great degree of liberty which we enjoy in this country, the degree of personal liberty which every man and woman enjoys, is limited by a like degree of liberty in every other person, and it is the duty of men and the duty of women in their conduct, in the exercise of the liberty which they enjoy, to consider that every other man and woman has the right to exercise the same degree of liberty; that when one person enters into society, — and society is the state in which personal liberty exists, — each gives up something of that liberty in order that the other may enjoy the same degree of liberty. It is a conception that perhaps some people find it difficult to understand, but it is the conception of liberty which we enjoy.’ It is no doubt true that there can be no organized society unless each member thereof is willing to give up something of his personal liberty when the welfare of the whole requires it; but what happens when the majority of a state undertake to determine what a man may not eat or drink, what he may not think or speak or write? No one will ever be able to realize how terrific the struggle must have been that finally resulted in religious liberty and in the freedom of expression. Should a minority be willing to give up religious and civil liberty in order to satisfy a majority that thinks and acts as a mass, or that thinks and acts, not of itself, but as has been prescribed by some authority, either ecclesiastical or political? Do not present conditions indicate that there is a conscious effort made both in the religious and the political world

to transform us from free men to what Nietzsche calls 'herd-men'? Perhaps, after all, humanity is destined once more to fall back to the dead level of uniformity of faith and thought and action and the resultant stagnation of civic and religious life."

On March 4 the editor writes of cooperative rather than competitive church-work, and takes issue with a strange spirit prevalent in our day that wants to remove differences between churches by disregarding them. He says: "The only way to eliminate competition between the denominations is to eradicate and obliterate every vestige of difference in religious belief and make the church once more a national church, as it was in the Middle Ages. It seems that the Protestants are moving in that direction. But in doing it they are admitting that the Roman Catholics are right in their contention that it was wrong on the part of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin to cause a schism, or split, in the Church, and that later John Smyth, the Wesleys, George Fox, and a long line of others who established sects made matters worse still. Oh, how we are longing to-day and praying for *external* unity of the Church! We are more anxious to have this realized than that all shall be one in Christ. When we repeat the trite expression, 'In unity there is strength,' we always have in mind external, visible unity,—the body of Christ that can be seen with the naked eye, the Church that has 'one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all,'—always in the established visible sense, coextensive not alone with the individual nations, but with all nations, one great galaxy of Christian peoples on the earth more brilliant than the Milky Way and, we fear, more cold."

Rightly he casts up the question: "Granted that all Christian work consists primarily and chiefly in evangelizing, Christianizing, the nations of the earth, whereby the Holy Spirit builds up the living temple of God, are not all the Christian churches cooperating now?"—

When the U. L. C., at its convention in Washington, D. C., in 1920 adopted its "Declaration of Principles concerning the Church and Its External Relationships," it was evident that there was some call for going on record as to what this body was willing or not willing to do in the way of cooperating with other church-bodies. An issue has now arisen between the U. L. C. and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America that makes it plain how the principles expressed in the Declaration of the U. L. C. will work out in practise. In the *Lutheran* for January 19, page 7, a committee of the U. L. C. submitted to the Federal Council a statement which details the activities in which the U. L. C. stands ready to cooperate with the Federal Council, if the latter finds the committee's statement acceptable. The relation that is to be established between the two bodies is to be "consultative only." We shall have to abide future developments in order to understand clearly what this consultative fellowship may actually mean. The Federal Council appears to be quite willing to accede to the propositions for affiliation which the committee of the U. L. C. has made. The *Lutheran Companion* of February 11, which reports this matter, suggests that willingness of the

Federal Council is probably due to the fact that it recognizes that this first step will eventually lead to full federation in the near future. This paper also says: "It will be interesting to note what effect this move on the part of the Executive Board of the U. L. C. will have upon the National Lutheran Council." D.

The Norwegian Lutheran Church. — In an editorial the *Lutheraneren* of February 15 speaks of the importance of the *particulæ exclusivæ* in presenting the correct Biblical teaching of the doctrine of justification. God pronounces the sinner righteous without the deeds of the Law. Justification is simply by faith in the work of Jesus, and not in any other work. And in this connection it must be emphasized, too, that the act of the sinner's believing in God's forgiving mercy in Christ as announced in the Gospel is not a work either in view of which God justifies, but is simply the means of apprehending what God freely offers in the evangelical promise. — The sanest and most comprehensive estimate of the late Pope and the doings of his Church in all lands has appeared in the *Lutheran Church Herald* (February 21). To the items which the editor mentions we think that the following should be added, because they seem not to be generally known: Benedict XV, on April 6, 1919, in an address to a French delegation, declared himself openly and solemnly as a "Frenchman by heart." Benedict XV was an enemy of the Germans. In an address of August 21, 1915, he leveled grave insults at Protestantism, singling out for special mention Luther, and using of the Protestants such epithets as "robbers," "servants of Satan." Benedict XV declared marriages of Protestants with Catholics not solemnized by a Catholic priest to be concubinages. This declaration is found in his Code of Church Laws. — In the issue for February 28, Wm. Schoeler, secretary, by request of H. J. Stolee, reports that an intersynodical conference was held at Spokane, November 29, between Norwegian Lutheran pastors and pastors of the Joint Synod of Ohio. Four papers were read. First of all the question was asked whether union between the two bodies is a thing to be desired. Here it was observed that consideration of the respective fields in which representatives of both parties labor, their common inner qualities, their common heritage and common aim and purpose, as well as their virtual agreement in doctrine and practise, seem almost imperatively to demand that the two synods work hand in hand. In the second paper the possible obstacles in the way of union — difference of language, national characteristics, history and tradition, unacquaintance with one another, differences in hymnology and the forms of worship, love of independence, proneness to suspicion the neighbor — were enumerated and considered. The third paper inquired into the nature of the union to be effected. The conviction of the conference was that the goal must be nothing short of an organic union. The last paper raised the question: What this conference could do to bring such a union about. The net result of the meeting was the subjoined resolution: "Resolved that this conference request its several districts to petition their general bodies to declare altar- and pulpit-fellowship between the Norwegian Lutheran Church and the Joint Synod of Ohio to be

in order, or else give reasons why such a declaration must still be postponed." — In *Lutheraneren* for February 22 announcement is made that 40 congregations — the constitutional number — have asked that a convention be held this year for the purpose of "electing a Vice-President, etc." The movement is deprecated by X., who urges against it the large expenditure it will entail — from a quarter to half a million dollars — and the lack of urgent business. He urges that the Synod's Board of Efficiency and Economy first submit its report to the congregations, in order that they may see what matters will have to be taken up at the convention; also that the delegates be instructed how to vote on these matters. "And when the convention has voted, let it be clearly understood by everybody that it is useless afterwards to come with clenched fist and the threat of a split, etc., if the convention acts thus or so. We believe also that the action of these 40 congregations will have its significance. It will show us weaknesses in the organization of our body which we perhaps did not foresee. As time passes, the body will gain more and more experience, and that will cause the roots of our body to strike deep, so deep that the winds may blow and the storms howl, and all this will only make us stand 'united and loyal till the Donner Mountain falls.'" — The same paper reports that Provost Gleditsch in Norway, speaking to a modern liberal audience, declared that in a comparison between Dr. Hallesby, of the stricter confessional party, and member of the "Menigheds-fakultet" at Christiania, and Barrat, he would have to side with the latter. Barrat used to be with the Methodists and is now the leader of the fanatics in Norway who claim to have the gift of tongues. D.

United Norwegian Church. — The extraordinary convention of this body is announced by President Stub for June 15—21, Minneapolis to be the meeting-place (*Lutheraneren*, March 15). In the *Lutheran Church Herald* for March 14, the Synod's "Resolution Committee" publishes a request to the 40 congregations who have called for the convention to withdraw their request, and President Stub disavows responsibility for the holding of the convention. D.

Germany. — All Bible societies have agreed to publish a new revision of the Bible. *Luthersk Vidnesbyrd* remarks: "Now that the beginning has been made with revising the Bible, there seems to be no end of these attempts at revision. Why are people not satisfied with the old text of Luther? They imagine that from the view-point of science they are superior to Luther; but Luther is God's instrument, and Luther's Bible translation, viewed as a whole, is unsurpassed. Whoever wants to revise that has forgotten the spirit of the Reformation. The modern spirit is not always the best nor the wisest." — The former Prussian Prime Minister Stegerwald addressed a meeting of workmen belonging to the Catholic Centrist Party at Bochum on March 5. He discussed his favorite theme of a reconstruction of Germany through cooperation of the existing political parties. This time Stegerwald — himself a Centrist — pleaded for a working union between the Evangelicals and the Centrists. "If it should not be feasible to bridge over certain confessional contrasts in the domain

of politics, there is another way, and that is the union (*Zusammenschluss*) of our evangelical fellow-citizens on the same political and social basis with us into a party that combines with the Centrists in a permanent cooperation. If Catholicism and Protestantism are in the future to find in Germany a uniform relation to the state,—and that is the essential thing and the primary issue in all considerations guided by party politics,—I do not see why large groups of our people, in so far as they regard the Christian culture of our people as the basis for the reconstruction of Germany, could not be gathered in a united political party. The external party-forms are not essential political issues; the essential thing is for the believing part of the German people to find a united relationship to the state, and that all who are thinking along Christian and national lines and are free from the narrowness of caste and party politics, also of mammonism,—all who see the prerequisite for another ascendancy of the German people in the cultivation of a thoroughgoing social community-spirit, should combine in a permanent political cooperative union, and thus secure for themselves for a long time the control (*Fuehrung*) of the state." (*Koelnische Zeitung*, Wochenausg., March 8.) Stegerwald is a Roman Catholic. What his plan means for the separation of Church and State in Germany is plain from the foregoing. There will be no separation of the Church from the State, but a control of the State by the Church, if he and his party can bring it about with the aid of the Protestants. There are thousands of "Protestants" in Germany who will swallow this Catholic bait, hook and all, and imagine they are coming into their own by this cooperative scheme.—The commission appointed by the State Church of Prussia to frame a new constitution finished its labors March 4, after several months of hard work. The new constitution will be published soon. It is reported that the introductory statement caused lively debates and was adopted in the closing session of the commission by a vote of 23 to 8. It reads: "Faithful to the heritage received from the fathers, the Evangelical Church of Prussia takes its stand upon the Gospel presented in the Holy Scriptures, concerning Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord and Savior, as He is testified to us and confessed in the Confession of the Church, particularly in the Apostolic Creed of the old Church, and in Reformation times in the Augsburg Confession, the Small Catechism of Luther and the Heidelberg Catechism. This Gospel is the inviolable basis for the doctrine, work, and fellowship of the Church. For the sake of external order the Church adopts the subjoined constitution. The confessional status and the union in the churches, the ecclesiastical provinces, and congregations are not affected by it." This is a plain avowal of the *status quo ante*, and the documentary evidence that, if there were any Lutherans loyal to the Confession of their Church in the Commission, they have not gained anything from the framers of the new organization, which will be the old hodge-podge of incongruities, held together artificially by indifference and mechanical religiousness, that the former State Church was.—In Saxony, where the State Church is Evangelical Lutheran, the new constitution contains the following paragraph: "The Evan-

gical Lutheran State Church of Saxony, faithful to the faith of the fathers, takes its stand on the Gospel of Christ, as contained in the Holy Scriptures and as testified in the first Unaltered Augsburg Confession, and besides, in the other confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church." *Ev.-Luth. Freikirche* remarks: "The *Allgem. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung* boasts that by adopting this paragraph the State Church has 'placed itself on the basis of the Confession of the Church with a plainness that is worthy of imitation.' We cannot join in this praise. The mere fact that this paragraph was adopted by the state synod, in which representatives of divergent views were entitled to a seat and vote shows that it is by no means unambiguous. Otherwise the opponents of the Lutheran Confession would have protested against it, or would have had to declare their withdrawal from the Church. The ambiguity is contained in the phrase 'the Gospel of Christ.' This phrase was fifty years ago substituted for the phrase 'the pure doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.' It is admitted that among the theologians there prevails the greatest confusion regarding the real meaning of the phrase. Thus the phrase becomes a mere trade-sign beneath which those who confess and those who deny the saving truth strike hands. That is nothing else than a profanation of sacred things. The avowal of the Gospel is pressed into service to untruthfulness and degraded to a mere formula. The reporter of a political journal speaks much more to the point by saying that according to the resolution of the Synod there was to have been placed at the head of the Constitution of the Saxon State Church 'a sort of' confessional statement. But the *Allgem. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung* ought to know that what it says at the end of its report will remain a 'pious wish,' viz.: 'The necessary counterpart to this paragraph would be a decision, just as unambiguous, providing for the application of the Confession, in order that it may not be a mere paper confession.' Since this decision is lacking, and as long as it is lacking, the confession is a mere paper confession. Accordingly, we must persist in our refusal to recognize the Saxon State Church as a confessionally Lutheran Church." — Our brethren in the German Free Church in 1917 had approached the Breslau Free Church ("Ev. Luth. Church in Prussia") with a view to come to an understanding and enter into fellowship with them. The effort has come to naught, because the Breslau Free Church insists that the conference at which they will meet our brethren must be opened with joint devotional exercises, which our brethren declared they could not do for conscience' sake while the question of their unity in the Spirit with the Breslau Free Church was not settled. Another reason why the overtures of our Saxon brethren were declined was because they had proposed that the first subject to be discussed at their conference with the Breslau Free Church should be the doctrine of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. They had submitted the following theses for discussion: 1. In their original text all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament have been inspired word for word by the Holy Ghost. 2. For this reason not only those parts of the Holy Scripture which have a direct bearing on our salvation, but also

such Scripture terms and passages as contain facts of history, natural history, geography, and the like, are in the sense just stated the Word of God. 3. To speak of a 'divine-human form' of the Holy Scriptures would be permissible at best in this sense, that God the Holy Spirit, the sole Author of the Holy Scriptures, for our sake employs human words, phrases, images, and the like, but not in the sense in which modern theology applies this term 'divine-human' to the Holy Scriptures, namely, to indicate that there are in the original text inaccuracies, errors, and contradictions, at least in minor matters." The authorities of the Breslau Free Church declined to discuss these theses, because they declare it to be un-Lutheran to discuss any "theory" of inspiration, and claim it as a distinction of the Lutheran over against the Reformed Church that inspiration be not narrowly defined, but latitude be given to the belief of individuals on this matter. They insist that it is sufficient for all purposes and does justice to the teaching of Scripture on inspiration to hold that the Bible is God's infallible Word and the sole norm of our faith. Texts like 2 Tim. 3, 16 and 1 Cor. 2, 13 they do not discuss. The entire episode shows again that the much-lauded principles of toleration, love, etc., of modern liberal theology break down when they are to be applied to representatives of confessional Lutheranism.—Statistics of the Saxon Free Church for 1921, as compared with the preceding year, show the following facts: the members live in 444 places (+39); there are 106 preaching-stations (+23), served by 25 regular and 2 supply pastors (+4). The Saxon Free Church numbers 7,259 souls (+679), 4,971 communicants (+517), 1,664 voting members (+196), 1,302 school-children (+314), 208 were baptized (+68), 185 confirmed (+25), 15,990 communed (+965). To the latter 434 (+28) are added, who received private absolution, bringing the sum total of communicants up to 16,424 (+993). There were 86 marriages (—24) and 88 burials (—1).
