

Luther Found to be Right On Reformation's Key Issue

Washington — After more than five years of intensive research into the works of Martin Luther, an American priest has returned from Germany with the finding that at the core of the Reformation was an argument between Luther and Rome on just one major dogma — and that Luther was right.

"His central concern was a fully Catholic one, directed against a theological error in the Church of Luther's day," said the Rev. Harry J. McSorley, C.S.P., a 34-year-old Paulist priest and former star grid lineman for Bucknell University.

According to Father McSorley, the theological error that Luther attacked — getting off a chain of repercussions that led to the historic split in Christianity — was that God would give man Grace if he worked by his own natural powers at living a holy life.

This was a variation, the Paulist said, on a heresy that had already been attacked by the Second Council of Orange in 529, but somehow this Council teaching had "gotten lost from the 800's until the 1530's."

Consequently, in Luther's time, the "in" Catholic theologian — Gabriel Biel — was teaching: When a man does what is in him, even if he does not then have Grace, he will receive that grace simply by exercising his free will and doing good.

Retorted Luther: "Free will is an empty word. When a sinner does what is in him, he commits only sin."

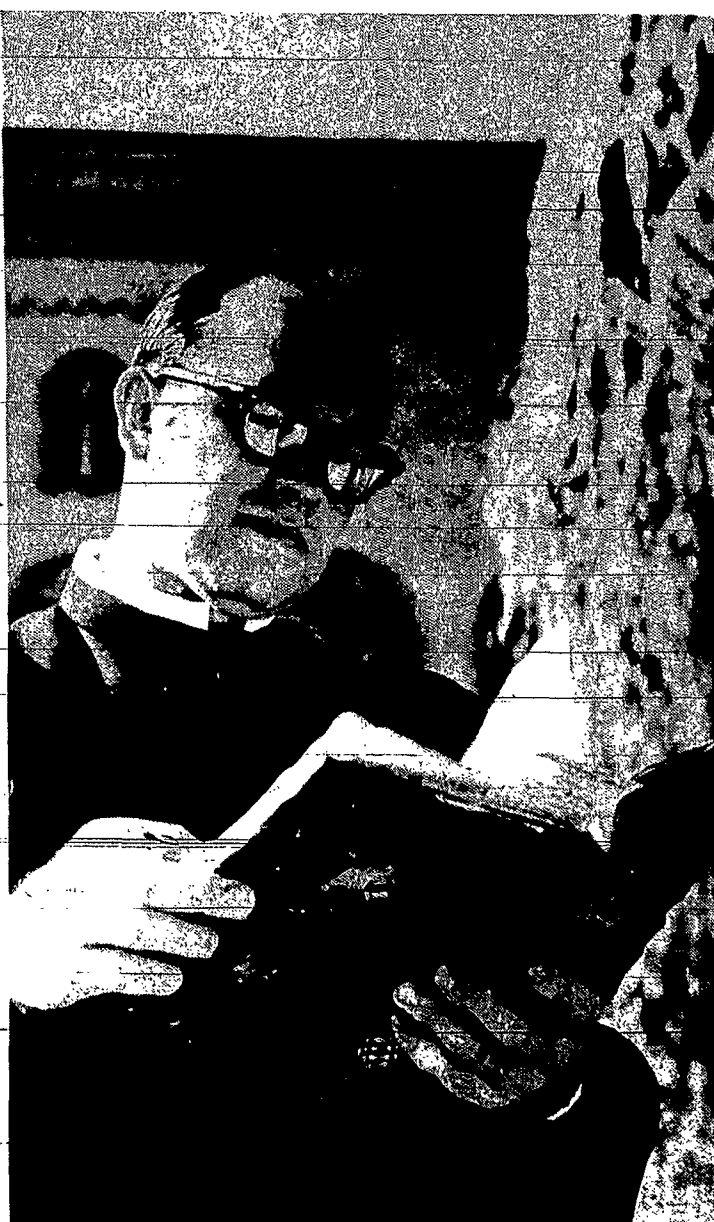
Luther was, Father Sorley maintains, simply upholding the teachings of St. Paul and St. Augustine that God's Grace, freely given, is necessary for salvation. Rome authorities took Luther's free will statement out of context, demanded a retraction, and set in motion a series of misunderstandings that drove Rome and Luther farther and farther apart.

"There was a tragic misunderstanding at the heart of the Reformation," said Father McSorley. "I criticize the Church of that time for not using an ecumenical method in questioning Luther. The ecumenical method is 'What do you mean?' and not 'What did you say?' The theologians who sought to condemn Luther were not interested in what he meant. They just wanted a retraction. If there was a basic attitude of respect for the person, and simple charity, it is very likely that the Reformation never would have happened."

Father McSorley supports this contention in a book being published this Fall in Germany: "Luther's Doctrine of the Unfree Will According to His Main Work — 'On the Unfree Will' — in the Light of the Biblical and Catholic Tradition: A Contribution to Ecumenical Theology." He said several American publishers have already expressed interest in the book, "with a more appealing title."

The Paulist did research for the book — originally a thesis — at the Universities of Munich and Heilbronn and at Tubingen and Paderborn, studying Protestant theology "to do anything significant on Luther, you have to climb a mountain of secondary literature".

He discovered that, in Luther's mind, the key Reformation issue was not, in Luther's words, "such trifles as the Papacy, purgatory or indulgences." The "issue on which everything else hinges" was the question of unfree will. Father McSorley stresses that



Father McSorley reading from a volume of "Luther's Works" at the University of Munich.

Luther did not espouse the unfree will idea — "his actual error" — until he could not convince Rome of the rightness of his original position and he began picking up any stick he could find.

The "stick" he picked up — "unfree will" — was a phrase he found in St. Augustine and proceeded to interpret it out of context, saying that everything that happens in the world happens by necessity, because of the fore-knowledge God has of it. (Augustine simply meant that without Grace, man could not do anything of merit with his free will.)

"This is the other side of the justification by faith alone doctrine," Father McSorley points out in citing Luther's unfree-will view.

A further irony — and tragedy — in the original misunder-

standing between Luther and Rome, according to Father McSorley, is the fact that "the denial of free will is an argument that was never accepted by the Lutheran Confessional Statements, nor is it accepted by modern Lutheran theologians. In harmony with most Protestant theologians, they emphasize that faith involves a free decision by man."

Recently teaching a summer course in "Questions of Ecumenical Theology" at Trinity College in Washington, Father McSorley is scheduled to give a Fall series of lectures at such non-Catholic schools as Ohio State University, the University of Texas, Louisiana State University, S.M.U., and Duke. After that, he hopes to take a teaching post on a secular campus, teaching ecumenical theology. — (Catholic Press Features)

Let's Have Only Sharp Pictures!

Photographs sent in by organizations for publication in the Courier should be in sharp focus and properly exposed.

The editors regret that several pictures sent in this past week were either out of focus, too light or too dark. These we simply cannot use.

If your project is worth promoting, isn't it worth getting a professional photographer to take the picture?

The Courier can provide a photographer only for events that are of major diocesan significance. Otherwise we have to rely on your arranging for the photo.

Polaroid photos taken by amateurs ordinarily don't turn out well enough for half-tone reproduction.

We also can't print pictures of "new officers." There are more than 150 parishes in the Rochester Diocese and about as many more other societies — all with "new officers." Send us news and photos of events and everybody will enjoy reading and seeing what you're doing.

Daily Life A Sacrament

Toledo — (NC) — "The Sacrament of Daily Living" might be a good description of the recent Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, according to the assistant director of the Social Action Department, National Catholic Welfare Conference.

From the very beginning of the Christian era, believers confronted the problem of the relation between religious faith and daily lives, Father John F. Cronin said. Their solutions often took such forms as flight from the world and total separation of religion and worldly activity.

"But the encyclicals of Pope John XXIII, and the major pronouncement of the Vatican Council on the world, took a totally different position," the priest continued. "The world of business, of culture, of science, of the arts — this too is the world that God created and proclaimed good. Here is where God meets man everyday, just as truly as He comes to us in prayer and formal worship. In his sense we can sail our day at the factory, the office or the home as the sacrament of daily living."

Father Cronin gave the sermon at the Labor Day Mass (Sept. 5) at St. Francis de Sales Church here.

every person with whom we have meaningful contact. This is a high form of religion that too often goes unpracticed," he stated.

"The council tells us particularly to be concerned with the poor and the neglected," Father Cronin continued. "Poverty is difficult enough to bear at any time, but its hardships are multiplied many times over when it is accompanied by discrimination and neglect."

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Nazareth College Grad Receives \$2,400 Grant

A 1966 Nazareth College graduate has been awarded a traineeship from the National Library of Medicine in the field of medical librarianship.

Pauline Angione, 751 Harvard St., now attending the University of Chicago, will receive a cash payment of \$2,400 to assist her in her studies during the 1966-67 academic year.

The cash award will be in addition to a full tuition scholarship previously awarded for study in the university's Graduate Library School.

Miss Angione was a biology major at Nazareth.

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Miss Suffredini Last Rites Held In Seneca Falls

Seneca Falls — Solemn Funeral Mass for Miss Ada M. Suffredini was offered in St. Patrick's Church, Monday, Sept. 5.

Miss Suffredini, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Suffredini, 36 Center St. died following a car-truck accident at the intersection of Routes 414 and 96.

Miss Suffredini, a school teacher, was a graduate of William Smith College, Geneva and had taught 9th grade English at Canandaigua Academy.

She had recently accepted a position as librarian at Cato Central School, Corning. She was also a graduate of Mynders Academy, Seneca Falls and had attended Monroe Community College.

Besides her parents, she is survived by a brother, Albert at home and several aunts, uncles and cousins.

Burial was in Columbkille Cemetery. Arrangements by Doran Funeral Home.

Program for Vocations

London — (NC) — Father Godfrey Poage, C.F., director of the Pontifical Work for Religious Vocation of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, will open a program of prayer for an increase in vocations that will be held simultaneously in Britain and Ireland from Aug. 30 to 31.