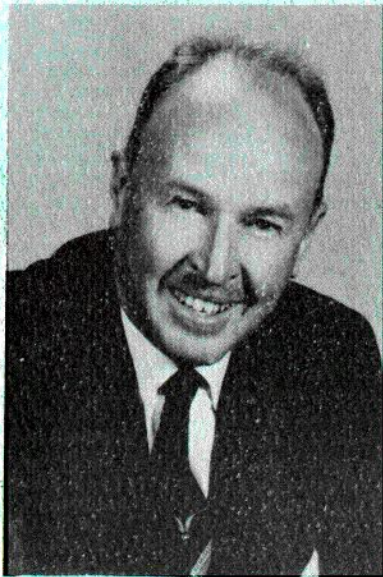


Luther and the Reformation

Dr. Allen A. MacRae
President
Faith Theological Seminary
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania



Two hundred years after Luther's death two young men who had been brought up in a fine religious family desired to make their lives count for the church. These two men, John and Charles Wesley, traveled to America and worked in Georgia for two or three years, but seemed to accomplish nothing. They felt that their time had been entirely wasted. They went back to England in disappointment, expecting to continue their methodical attempt to carry out the rituals and forms of the church and to try in every way to help their parishioners. One day John Wesley sat in a little Moravian chapel in London. In order to understand what these Moravians said he had learned the German language. As he sat there he heard someone read Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, in which the teaching of salvation by faith was so clearly set forth, and felt his heart strangely warmed. John Wesley counted his conversion from that moment. In succeeding months he went out to preach salvation by faith all over England. His brother Charles had a similar experience a little later, which was based upon Luther's preface to his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. Strangely, the third of that great trio that so moved England and America, George Whitefield, the close friend of John and Charles Wesley, had a similar experience, not from reading Martin Luther, but from reading a book by a Scottish divine that John Wesley had given him, hoping that it would help him spiritually. From reading this book George Whitefield had the same experience of conversion before John Wesley did. Luther's influence has been as great as that of any man since the Apostle Paul. God used him in a marvelous way to remind people of the terrible-ness of sin, to make clear to their minds the Biblical teaching of justification by faith, and to bring them back to absolute loyalty to the Word of God and to determination to study this book, which is the only possible source of knowledge in religious matters, and to learn from it those vital facts that are necessary if Christianity is to survive.

Today Luther is honored in name, but his teachings are forgotten in many sections. The American Council of Christian Churches stands firmly on Luther's great teachings. Let us emulate the courage and devotion of that great man. Let us determine to count our lives as nothing if only we can accomplish what Jesus Christ wants us to do.