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ESSENTIALS OF THE FAITH THAT SAVES.¹⁾

1. SINGULARITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

In the judgment of modern men everywhere Christianity occupies the foremost position among the religions of the world. As regards the number of its adherents, it is surpassed by some Oriental religions, but it is unquestionably the greatest as regards spiritual power, moral dynamic, and civilizing force.

Men whom extensive and close observation, protracted and exhaustive study, have enabled to form conclusive opinions on the matter have declared that the Christian religion, by reason of its basic principles, is in a class by itself. With the assurance that characterizes the matured conviction of the historian, Guizot declares: "Outside of Christianity there have been grand spectacles of activity and force, brilliant phenomena of genius and virtue, generous attempts at reform, learned philosophical systems, and beautiful mythological poems, but no real profound or fruitful regeneration of humanity and society. Jesus Christ from His cross accomplishes what erstwhile in Asia and Europe princes and philosophers, the powerful of the earth, and sages, attempted without success. He changes the moral and the social state of the world. He pours into the souls of men new enlightenment and new powers. For all classes, for all human conditions He prepares destinies before His advent unknown. He liberates them

1) Two lectures delivered before Lutheran students of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Wis. Published by request.

LUTHER AND ZWINGLI..

A PARALLEL AND A CONTRAST.

4.

The meager information which has come down to us regarding Luther's studies at Mansfeld and Magdeburg permits only guesses at the net results of his training up to 1498. His religious knowledge was limited to the Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer, that is, the mere text of these three parts of Christian doctrine had been impressed upon his memory with a good deal of unnecessary rigor. The instruction had been notoriously weak as regards the explanation and application to life of the religious principles embodied in the Law and the Gospel. It was head-knowledge, not heart-perception, at which the masters of the rod in the Mansfeld school aimed, and their method of imparting knowledge was purely mechanical. The pupils learned by rote. Quick apperception and a responsive memory were a pupil's best mental asset. The pupil who was given to musing on the matter of study, who pondered on the why and wherefore of what he was raming and cramming into his reluctant brain, in a word, the pupil who engaged in the luxury of thinking, lost out in the race.

At church the Gospels, Epistles, and Psalms, occasionally portions from the Prophets, were read to the congregation, and through this channel there flowed into the wondering mind of young Luther some religious knowledge which proved valuable to him in later life, because, though buried at the time beneath much superstitious rubbish, it was left there to germinate unto a future harvest. The insipid memorial verses which Luther transferred to his memory from the Cizio Janus—the Saints' Calendar—possessed hardly any educational value.

Really spiritual impressions Luther derived only from what would now be regarded hardly as a minor study—singing.

This was because the singing was confined to church-hymns, and of these there was an increasing number in the German vernacular. The tendency to introduce German into the public worship of the Church was growing ever stronger since the days of Hus. To satisfy the popular craving, attempts were made to translate the Latin Vulgate into German, and brief snatches of German hymns were taken up into the Latin service. Thus, the *Kyrie Eleison* which the congregation, without understanding its meaning, chanted responsively to the litany sung by the priest, came to be prefaced by short verses in German characteristic of the seasons in the ecclesiastical year. Luther has at a later period expanded some of these into some of the best hymns of evangelical Christendom. Such hymns as "All Praise to Jesus' Hallowed Name," "Christ Now Is Risen," "Now Do We Pray the Holy Ghost," contain reminiscences of Luther's boyhood days.

In literary attainments Luther had not passed beyond the rudiments of Latin,—the declensions and the conjugations, with a lean vocabulary.

The one year of study at Magdeburg cannot have advanced Luther greatly. The school of the "Nullbrueder," like most of the schools of the Brethren of the Common Life, had undoubtedly come under the influence of Humanism. More rational methods of teaching and distinct aims to influence the inner life of pupils were characteristic of the "new learning." But as yet Humanism was not at all that intellectual force which we observe it to be in Germany twenty years later. What the fourteen-year-old boy Martin got from his teachers at Magdeburg can hardly have been more than a firmer grasp of his rudimentary Latin and a taste for reading.

One fatal impression, however, was made upon him at Magdeburg that led to a disastrous consequence: the sight of the princely friar, the Duke of Anhalt, whom Luther saw carrying the beggar's bag through the streets, and whom he regarded as a model of sanctity. Seven years later Luther was imitating him at Erfurt.

Everything considered, Luther came to Eisenach less fitted for learned study than a modern grammar school student. But now his real training began. The school chosen for him — St. George's, connected with the parish church — had an able teaching force. The principal, John Trebonius, was not only a well-educated man, but also an able teacher of no mean pedagogical talent. Besides him, Luther remembers Wigand Gueldinapf as a teacher from whose instruction he derived great benefits. His studies now became more connected, systematized, and thorough. The chief study was rhetoric, the use of language in spoken and written discourse. The Latin classics were the chief subject of study. Greek was just beginning to be cultivated by a few of the more progressive classicists of the day. To what extent Luther acquired the knowledge of Greek during his stay at Eisenach we do not know, but that the foundation for his knowledge of the classical Latin authors was laid during this period is certain. His love for this kind of literature Luther retained to the end of his life. The numerous references to the Latin classics in his writings show that he had kept increasing his stock of knowledge from this source even after he had left Erfurt, yea, when he had entered the monastery. Also some history must have been included in his studies at this time.

When we bear in mind that it was during his stay at Eisenach that the external conditions were for the first time changed for Luther in a most favorable manner, by his being received into the home of the wealthy Cotta, we can imagine how the student in Luther awoke to consciousness in this period. Interesting and sympathetic teachers and the cordial sympathy of a noble protectress proved a most beneficial stimulus to this gifted youth, whose intellectual growth would very likely have become hopelessly stunted but for the genial influences that were exerted upon him in his "beloved Eisenach." It was the critical time in the life of a youth — from his fifteenth to his eighteenth year — that Luther spent in this town.

However, no incentive to the great reformatory work, no

suggestion of the heroic task which Luther undertook later is discoverable in this period. His development was altogether churchly. Luther was a pious student, who regarded daily prayer, attendance at church, and observation of the rules of the Church as a religious duty. The holy Catholic Church, her laws, her authority, were viewed with awe by Luther, and the awe was deepened when he heard of the monk Hilten, who was imprisoned at Eisenach for rebelling against the teaching of the Church. We may even say that Luther's development during the Eisenach period was churchward. His frequent visits at his cousin's, the sexton of St. Nicolai Church, the aid he received from the Franciscans at the St. Elizabethstift, and, above all, his intimate relation to Vicar Braun at the Marienstift, brought him into close touch with the church-organism and officials of the Church, and it is not impossible that Luther's thought, at a later time, of seeking peace for his soul behind the walls of a cloister may have found nourishment in his reminiscences of the churchmen he had met at Eisenach, and of what he had seen of their life.

5.

In educational advantages Switzerland, in the age of Zwingli, did not surpass Germany. Jackson thinks that it was even inferior to Germany. But Humanism was making great headway, and when Pope Pius II, in 1460, founded the University of Basel, he little thought that he was aiding Basel to become one of the centers of the reformatory movement. For many notable scholars flocked to Basel, and when Froeschauer set up his printing-press in that city, Basel became one of the publishing centers of Europe. Throughout Switzerland the spirit of the "new learning" was leavening the masses, and this spirit indulged in some very frank criticism of the Church, her officers, her institutions; and her doctrines. Zwingli's earliest teacher, his uncle Bartholomew, had himself been touched by humanistic influences. When he received his nephew, it had already been settled between him and his

brother that Ulrich was to be trained for the priesthood. However, he was not to be a priest of the old school, brought up in the strict conservatism of the papal system, but a priest of the new age, filled with the enlightenment which the study of the classics and fine arts could impart, progressive and striving for greater independence from the higher powers of the Church. "It is not too much to say that we owe the Zwingli of history to the fact that his father's brother was a friend of the New Learning." (*Jackson.*)

This uncle also determined the choice of Zwingli's teachers when Zwingli had outgrown the tutelage of the parish school at Wesen, and his uncle could not give him sufficient attention. When Zwingli went to Klein Basel, to the school of St. Theodore's Church, "it was evident that he had the making of a scholar in him." In his new teacher, Gregory Buenzli, he found not only an amiable and efficient teacher, but, what was of immensely greater value, a fatherly friend, who continued his loving interest in his pupil till his death. Latin was the principal study also for Zwingli. He learned Latin by means of an interlinear translation of Cato's *Morals*. Besides Latin, dialectic and music were included in his studies. In four years Zwingli had not only become the brightest pupil in Buenzli's school, a skilful musician, and a ready debater, so much so that older pupils of the school were no match for him, but he had outgrown even Buenzli's instruction, and was sent back to his uncle.

Heinrich Woelflin at Bern had been the first prominent Swiss pedagog to adopt the new methods of teaching, and the new educational ideas which were advocated by the Humanists. To him Zwingli's uncle decided to entrust the further training of his promising nephew. In the same year that Luther comes to Eisenach, Zwingli goes to Bern, but with what advantages over his northern contemporary as regards thorough preparation and accomplishments can well be imagined. Zwingli's brilliant student career was continued at Bern for two years. Most likely, it would have naturally terminated then for the

same reason that caused him to quit Buentzli's school. But a peculiar event hastened his departure. Zwingli's uncle and father learned to their amazement that he had begun to live in the Dominican monastery. He had not applied for admission into the order, but the step he had taken would unquestionably lead to that. The monks had observed the intellectual powers of the young student and had determined to secure him as a member of their society. As a bait they held out to Zwingli an advanced training in music, and Zwingli, who was passionately fond of music and even then an accomplished player on a number of instruments, took the bait. Like Luther's father, Zwingli's was angry at his son's entering the monastery, but, unlike Hans Luther, the older Ulrich Zwingli had in his power to cut the fatal ties that were forming for his son by his peremptory veto. Like Luther's father, Zwingli's had a strong aversion to the monastic life. The reputation of monks in Switzerland was, if anything, worse than in Germany. That Zwingli's uncle and guardian was silently backing Zwingli's father goes without saying. Thus it happened that Zwingli was transferred to the University of Vienna while Luther was entering upon his last year of study at Eisenach.

The University of Vienna was just being reconstructed on humanistic lines, and Zwingli felt at home there. His studies now assumed a wide range—"all that philosophy embraces," his biographer Myconius relates. The two years which he spent at Vienna not only increased his learning, but afforded him opportunities for observing affairs of the State and the Church such as Luther did not have at this time. To a bright student it is an education in itself to be able to see and hear great men who help to shape events in history, to become acquainted with men from foreign countries, and to behold, and be merged in, the social life of a metropolis. Zwingli made full use of his opportunities, and when he left Vienna in 1502, he had become a young gentleman of well-defined literary tastes and pleasing manners, a student of books and of men.

A writer in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (15, 772) notes the following: "Zwingli's name is entered on the roll of the University of Vienna for the winter term of 1498—99, but he was excluded from the university. The reason for his exclusion is unknown. (Cf. F. Ruegg, in *Zeitschrift fuer Schweiz. Kirchengesch.* II, 1908, 215; V, 1911, 241; and Aug. Waldburger, in *Schweiz.-theol. Zeitschrift* XXVII, 1911, Nos. 39, 91, 134, 181.) Zwingli, however, appears to have overcome the difficulty, for he was again matriculated in 1500." The data on this episode are insufficient, and most biographers of Zwingli pass them over. Jackson notes only the entry on the summer semester matricula of 1500.

6.

The three years at Eisenach had worked wonders for Luther. When he stood before his father after the completion of his studies at Eisenach, about Eastertide 1501, the heart of the honest miner leaped with joy as he beheld his first-born in the vigor of his young manhood. Luther had finished his studies with honor. The enthusiasm for study had seized him, and the father was now in a position to gratify the son's longing. It was decided that he attend the University of Erfurt.

The four years which he spent at the university were a period of ferment for Luther. The star of his worldly fortunes was rising rapidly: he was matriculated at the opening of the summer semester in 1501, and already a year and a half later—on Michaelmas 1502—he received the bachelor's degree from the philosophical faculty with whom he had been inscribed. Out of fifty-seven candidates he was the thirtieth. Two years and a half later—about Epiphany 1505—he had risen to the dignity of Master of Arts. Out of seventeen candidates he was second. The university was beginning to take notice of him. But inwardly a different change was coming over him: his sun seemed to be setting. Joy was passing out of his life; he was dissatisfied with himself, because he was convinced that God was dissatisfied with him. A strange evolution this! The higher men lift him in their estimation, the deeper he

sinks in his own. External glory, internal shame; apparently headed for heaven, actually slipping to the brink of hell. Finally, then comes the first great renunciation that startles and shocks the little world in which he had been living: the young professor—Luther had already begun to lecture—turns monk.

There is nothing in Zwingli's life that resembles these soul-struggles of the young Luther. True, Zwingli had to engage in many moral conflicts, and the latter half of his Zurich pastorate is a very agitated period, but Zwingli's struggles were not, like Luther's during the Erfurt period, struggles with himself, struggles for the liberty of a Christian man. In the summer semester of 1502 he entered the University of Basel, and at the same time taught the classics in the school attached to St. Martin's Church. In 1504, he took his B. A. and in 1506 his M. A.

7.

The course of studies at the medieval universities of Europe was almost stereotype. It began with the art's course, embracing "logic, dialectic, grammar, and rhetoric, followed by arithmetic, various natural sciences, ethics, and metaphysics." Later on it led over to theology; in fact, the study of theology was in part combined with that of philosophy. There was no material difference between the studies pursued by Luther at Erfurt and those in which Zwingli engaged at Basel. But there was a difference in the intellectual spiritual atmosphere at these two universities: Basel was a young university, striving to win distinction for itself, progressive, eagerly reaching out for the promise of greatness which the New Learning held out, and bidding fair, after it had attracted the great Erasmus, to become one of the great centers of Humanism. Erfurt was an old university, resting on its laurels. After the decline of Prague it had leaped into prominence, and for three or four generations before Luther it was regarded as the leading university of Germany. Its character was staid, conservative. True, the New Learning had ardent advocates in Erfurt, and

the forces at the university, both professors and students, were beginning to align themselves as either scholastics or poets; but both sides bowed in seeming concord to the supremacy of the Church, and the ticklish questions in theology which the philosophers and classicists raised against the hide-bound scholastics were regarded by the latter as academic diversions, just as they smiled benevolently at the pagan aesthetics of these people as artistic fancies of a poet to whom license must be accorded.

Koestlin describes the learned pursuits at a medieval university in the third chapter of his biography of Luther. (p. 31 f.) Together with the general laws and forms of correct thinking the teachers of philosophy, combined discussions of the facts of being which the thinking mind is to grasp. Furthermore, they would dilate on the cosmos as a whole, and trace the principal phenomena on the earth and in the skies to their causes. These lectures were an odd jumble of problems in astronomy, physics, natural history, and of known attempts to solve them since the days of Aristotle. The indispensable requisite for this kind of studies—keen and unbiased empirical investigation of the phenomena of nature, laboratory work—was utterly lacking. The medium of instruction was the deformed medieval Latin, with which the students were supposed to be thoroughly conversant. The Humanists, without intending to draw the students away from these venerable pursuits and hoary methods, sought to inspire them with a love of the ancient classics and their language. In this way the philosophical department of the university undertook to prepare students for special curricula in theology, jurisprudence, and medicine.

Luther leaped into these academic paths with whole-souled enthusiasm. Jodocus Trutvetter was rector the year in which Luther matriculated, and published his compendious *Summary of Logic* the same year. Bartholomaeus Arnoldi von Usingen lectured on metaphysics and physics. Both belonged to the philosophical faculty. The Erfurt philosophers and theologians were not original thinkers. They moved along in the beaten

tracks and the accepted forms of conventional scholasticism, which had long begun to decay. "The great question which agitated mediæval thought was whether the individual or the class was the reality; *e. g.*, in the word 'horse,' is the essential thing each particular horse, or the abstract of all the qualities which make up the conception? The realists, who decided in favor of the latter, flourished in the heyday of scholasticism; but the nominalists, who maintained the former, had now supplanted them, and Erfurt philosophy was therefore of this school." (*Preserved Smith.*) The older Realists with their logic had tried to pave the way to the natural sciences and to the research work of modern times. Over and against this tendency Trutvetter and his associates laid stress on the form in which human thought is expressed in terms, definitions, and syllogism. They developed the dry, subtile formalism which has been charged against the mediæval scholastic philosophy and theology as its greatest evil. Occam was their revered authority. But over and above Occam philosophers and theologians bowed to the master of philosophical thought, Aristotle. The influence of Aristotle's definitions were regarded as conclusive and final even in Christian theology. Every part of the Christian doctrine, even the concept of God, the Christian view of a moral religious life, of the natural powers of man, of human duty, responsibility, virtue, etc., was made to conform to the dicta of this pagan Greek. The scholastic age seemed to have lost all sense of the practical blasphemy which the admission of a heathen authority in the Christian religion involved. Trutvetter and Usingen did rise to the moral height of expressing greater admiration for him who looks for truth than for him who follows after authorities. They protested against the mixing of the wine of theology with the water of philosophy, but they did not change their method.

Luther was by these men led into the thorny dialectics and hair-splitting metaphysics that characterized the theological learning of the age. With an open mind and an eager desire to learn he devoured what this philosophy and theology could

offer him. He entered with zest into the academic disputations. They nicknamed him "the philosopher" because of his pronounced tendency to sound the depths of every thought and find a sufficient reason for things. It is not boastfulness, but exact truth when, in 1530, he says: "I know their dialectic and philosophy better than they know it themselves—all of them; besides, I am convinced that not one of them understands his Aristotle." At the time he did not realize what a miserable cheat was palmed off on his unsophisticated mind as the highest religious wisdom. The unreality of the Stagirite theology, the damnable perversion which it had wrought in the fundamental concepts of Christianity, became apparent to him only in the spiritual ordeal through which he was soon to pass, and in his theological controversies with the scholastic theologians fifteen years later. But it was a wonderful guidance of Providence that permitted him to become, first a victim of the philosophical and theological deceptions of the age, and, later, a merciless exposé and a heroic destroyer of these holy frauds.

Zwingli has to his end maintained the admiration for Aristotle and the philosophy that was dominated by Aristotle. His theology has a place in heaven even for Aristotle. He has never been able to assume that attitude of independence from Aristotle, and all purely rational thinking in religious matters that must characterize the Christian theologian. What he imbibed at Basel from his study of Aristotle he modified in his later life, and adapted it to existing circumstances, but he never threw it away as ballast which the theologian to whom the Scriptures are the sole authority must not carry. This is all the more remarkable because Zwingli, during the last half year of his studies at Basel, came under the personal influence of Thomas Wytténbach. Coming from Tuebingen, where he had been teaching, this theologian, on November 26, 1505, began to lecture at Basel on the "Sentences" of Peter Lombard, whose systematic introduction to the Fathers was the text-book in every medieval university. Luther, too, refers frequently to

the "Doctor Sententiarus." "Wytttenbach was a man with a message, and found in Zwingli a receptive hearer, who accepted certain of his ideas which were called heretical, and ever after defended them." (*Jackson.*) Among these views, according to a later testimony of Zwingli, were the unscriptural character of indulgences, the atoning virtue of the death of Christ, and the supreme authority of Holy Scripture. These views touch the base of the Christian religion, and have yielded the principles of Protestantism. But Zwingli has unquestionably failed to perceive the far-reaching effects which the consistent application of these principles to the theology of the day must produce. He received them as part of the new enlightenment, and they became an element in his advanced intelligence, but not a propelling force in him driving him to action against a hierarchy that had neutralized the influence of the Scriptures and the Christ upon men. Not until Luther, with the fervor which only the Spirit kindles, had begun to attack the papal system with the afore-mentioned principles, in 1519, Zwingli informs his followers that he had known those principles long ago. (See his writings, I, 254.) In other words, Zwingli claims by the aid of Wytttenbach to have anticipated Luther in his religious convictions by about twelve years. The wonder is that he could retain these convictions such a long time within himself. One begins involuntarily to speculate how differently the course of Luther's life would have been shaped if, instead of lecturing at Basel, Wytttenbach had come to teach at the University of Erfurt.

Luther received into the Cotta home.	1498	
	1500	Zwingli enters University of Vienna.
Luther enters University of Erfurt, about May.	1501	
Luther takes his B. A.	1502	Zwingli enters University of Basel.
	1504	Zwingli takes his B. A.
Luther takes his M. A.	1505	November 26. Wytttenbach begins to lecture at Basel.

(To be continued.)

D.