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LUTHER'S RELATION TO HUS.

1.

The quincentennial of the martyrdom of Hus on July 6¹⁾ recalls the legendary remark of the Czech confessor by which he is said to have prophetically linked himself in his dying hour with Luther.²⁾ That Luther, after the Leipzig Disputa-

1) His adherents, following an old Christian custom, have celebrated the day of his death as his *dies natalis*, his birthday unto the life everlasting. The date given in the *New Schaff-Herzog Encycl.* (5, 415) is wrong; the correct date is given on p. 418.

2) Luther begins to cite Hus's saying about 1530, first, in his Exposition of the Eleventh and Twelfth Chapters of Daniel (6, 927), and a few months later, in his Comment on the Supposed Imperial Edict (16, 1700). In the latter place he directly applies the saying to himself: "St. Johannes Hus hat von mir geweissagt, da er," etc.—There is no record that Hus spoke the words: "Hodie anserem uritis, sed ex meis cineribus nascetur cygnus, quem non assare poteritis." Gieseler supposes that the saying originated in Luther's time, and that it was formed partly from these words in a letter which Hus wrote from Constanza to the men of Prague: "They have first laid snares and prepared citations and anathemas for a goose" (anseri; "Hus" is *goose* in the Bohemian language); "and they are now laying snares for some of you. However, though the goose, which is a tame animal, a domestic fowl, cannot soar in its flight to high regions, and hence has not burst their snares, still there will be other birds, who by the Word of God rise to high regions in their flight and smash their traps"; partly from the words which Hus's brother martyr, Jerome of Prague, spoke a year later at his execution: "You know that your condemning me is an unjust and malicious act, no blame having yet been found that you can fasten on me. However, after my death I shall fasten a sting and put a gnawing pain in your conscience, and I call on God Almighty, the most high and righteous Judge, that after hundred years are passed, you shall answer me in His presence." (*Eecl. Hist.*, 3, 428. See Kurtz, *Lehrb. d. K.-G.*, 1, 340.)

tion (July, 1519) began to consciously identify himself with the anathematized Bohemian heretic, scores of references in his writings show. But just as certain it is that Luther did not intend to be a Hussite. He was startled when he made the discovery that he was. His whole previous training had been anti-Hussite. He had learned his theology from Paul, and when at length he came to proclaim himself a Hussite, he proclaimed his favorite apostle and his favorite church-father, Augustine, Hussites with himself.³⁾

In asserting for Luther independence of thought from Hus in the early reformatory movements, which began after the skirmish with Tetzcl, we do not intend to derogate aught from the just esteem in which Hus deserves to be held. While admitting—on the strength of Loserth's research—that Hus's best thought is revived Wyclifism, and lacks much of the originality and vigor of the British confessor,—admitting, moreover, that Hus lived and died more than half papist, still no Lutheran will think less of Hus than Luther himself. Luther never stints his praise of the remarkable knowledge⁴⁾ and the spiritual valor⁵⁾ and Christian heroism⁶⁾ of this "innocent Abel,"⁷⁾ this "holy, pious martyr,"⁸⁾ and yet criticizes Hus for not having discovered the foul center of the antichristian teaching of Rome: work-righteousness, the sacrifice of the mass, and idolatrous worship.⁹⁾ To Luther, Hus had been the first man to call the pope an antichrist: everybody must give him credit for that.¹⁰⁾ In smiting Hus, Rome had struck truth in the mouth;¹¹⁾ the papists must be reminded of that again and again, though they rave and gnash their teeth.¹²⁾ In Hus's days the Church of God seemed utterly extinct; still God filled him and his fellow, Jerome of Prague, with His Holy Spirit,¹³⁾ and suffered them to be destroyed only phys-

3) Luther to Spalatin, Feb., 1520. (XXIa, 239.)

4) XXIa, 247.

5) XXII, 1407.

6) VIII, 733 f.

7) V, 18. 1124.

8) XIII, 1283.

9) V, 84; XXII, 1774.

10) V, 1128.

11) IV, 1319.

12) V, 1131.

13) II, 2002.

ically,¹⁴⁾ not spiritually; for, behold, Hus is come out of his grave to torment his murderers and blasphemers!¹⁵⁾ Thus Luther never wearies in voicing his admiration for Hus, and delights in the conviction that he is carrying on the work which an honest man began before him.

2.

The historian has frequently been struck with the observation that the quiet thinking of the masses proceeds along illogical, if not illegitimate, lines. Germany, prior to the advent of Luther, was a devoutly Catholic country. The authority of the Holy Father was unquestioned in its borders. Heretics whom the Church had denounced were properly and piously abominated by the God-fearing. At the mention of the name of Hus the pious would cross themselves with righteous horror; for had not the famous Council of Constance burned him as a heresiarch? And had he not incited those cruel wars from which Bohemia was bleeding at every pore? German mothers would hush their unruly children by suggesting that a Hussite would come and get them. And yet Koestlin has discovered in the pre-Lutheran period "secret Hussite influences" that were at work in Germany.¹⁶⁾ The German peasant's thought might be sluggish, and his conclusions clumsy; but when he mused on the spectacle of a single man mounting the pyre rather than saying the one word: *Revoco!* to please the pope, he would secretly side with that man, because he seemed a man. And he would keep thinking in his ponderous fashion what it could possibly be that made the man so stubborn, and whether he had not a respectable reason for his stubbornness. And the learned doctors at the schools would sit poring over the historical records of the Council of Constance, and over the heretical writings of Wyclif and Hus which the pope had condemned, and would

14) XVIII, 1574.

15) V, 328.

16) *Martin Luther*, I, 6.

find arguments in them that strongly appealed both to their manhood and their Christian feelings. And so the official German dislike of Hus did not, in reality, tally with the unofficial, but sincere, admiration or pity of Hus.

3.

However this may be, we know that Luther had grown up a devout despiser of Hus, the heretic, the enemy of the Church. It is true that on several occasions during his life as a student at the university, and as a monk at the Augustinian convent, at Erfurt, he had heard startling opinions expressed regarding Hus. His teacher Johann Grefenstein, he relates in later years, had remarked to the students that Hus had suffered death though he had received no fair trial, and had not been convicted. He also says that in many parts of Germany there had remained a "murmuring" of dissatisfaction with the treatment accorded Hus.¹⁷⁾ Moreover, Luther's superior in the Augustinian order, Staupitz, at one time frankly repeated to Luther scornful remarks which Staupitz's predecessor, Proles, had made about Zachariae, one of the insincere prosecutors of Hus at the Council of Constanz. Lastly, it is true that the University of Erfurt was called "Erfordia Praga" because of the many professors and students of the University of Prague who had made their domicile in the Saxon town, when Bohemian influence under Hus resulted in hostile measures against German Catholics at that university. But far from making Erfurt a Hussite center of thought in Germany, the former hostilities of the authorities at Prague rather constituted a grievance, which those who had fled from them and settled at Erfurt, and their successors, were nursing against the followers of Hus. Nor could the Erfurtians easily forget the extraordinary distinction which had come to their professor Dr. Zachariae, who had received the Golden Rose from the pope in recognition of his zeal to have Hus con-

17) Koestlin, *M. L.*, I, 41.

demned and slain at Constanz, and whose grave and epitaph were pointed out with pride to strangers visiting Erfurt.¹⁸⁾

The pathetic effect which the teaching of Rome always has on simple, sincere, unsophisticated minds, because it creates in them an erring conscience, is shown by Luther's experience when he, for the first time, came in personal contact with the teaching of Hus. He had become a young theologian, and was reading such books as were available in the cloister library, when one day he chanced upon a volume of Hus's sermons, which somehow had escaped the fiery edict of the pope. Curious to know what this arch-heretic had taught, Luther began to read in his book, and was amazed at the Christian spirit of Hus and at the great force of His Scriptural reasonings. He could not help admiring the man, and was shocked to find himself thinking well of a heretic; for he had been taught that to think well of Hus was so great a crime that the sun must forthwith lose its luster if it shone on one who was harboring such thoughts. With a wounded heart he closed the book, and found comfort only in the thought that Hus had not been burned for the things he had written in that book, but for other teachings, and that he had written the book of sermons when he was still a loyal member of the Roman Church. Soon Luther was to learn to his dismay and temporary discomfiture that his pious explanation of the acts of the Council of Constanz did honor to his Catholic loyalty, but was historically untenable.

4.

The painful disillusionment began in the early part of July, 1519, and represents the crisis in Luther's debate with Eck at Leipzig. Here Luther was revealed as the dupe of his own pious fancy that the pope was the champion of Bible-truth. Eck, with the keen observation which is common to self-interested persons, had perceived, long before Luther was

18) *Ibid.*, p. 76.

aware of the catastrophe to which his argument must lead, that his opponent could be placed at a serious disadvantage by being identified with Hus. With a bland mien and a deprecatory gesture, as if he wished himself to wave aside a false imputation, Eck remarked on July 5th that among the "pestilential" errors of Wyclif and Hus which had been condemned by the Council of Constanz had also been statements such as these: Faith in the supremacy of the Roman Church is not necessary to salvation; the Church on earth need not have a visible head, and others. With sarcastic politeness Eck asked his worthy opponent Luther to pardon the dislike in which he, Eck, held the Bohemians, because they were enemies of the Church, and the mention which he had made of them in this connection, because in his humble opinion Luther's argument favored the Bohemian errors very much, and he had received information that the Bohemians were wishing Luther God-speed in his argument. Indignantly Luther replied that he did not approve of the Hussite schism, because the supreme law of God, love and unity of the Spirit, had been violated thereby. However, it was a shameless act of Eck, to cast out of the Church all those Greek fathers whom Luther had cited for his position, and whom Eck, by implication, declared Hussite heretics. But Eck was too shrewd a dialectician to surrender the advantage which he had gained over Luther: he demanded to know why Luther did not write against the Bohemians. Once more Luther sought to evade the issue; failing in that, he declared peremptorily: as regards the teachings of Hus and the Bohemians, there were some among them that were quite Christian and evangelical, *e. g.*, that there is only one universal Church, to which also those Christians belong who are outside of the Roman communion, and that a person's salvation is not conditioned on his accepting the supreme authority of the Roman Church. Whether Wyclif or Hus had defended these truths was of no moment: these truths must not be condemned. No Christian must be coerced into accepting articles of faith that are not founded

on Scripture, which alone can determine by divine right what we are to believe. Even jurists of the Church like Archbishop Nicolaus, of Palermo, had declared that the belief of a single Christian must supersede the decrees of popes and councils, if it rests on a better foundation than theirs, and that councils could err.

It was not the first time that Luther had cited the view of Nicolaus de Tedesco in his behalf: in his answer to Silvester Prierias he had defended his position by the same authority. But in this encounter with Eck he had for the first time, in a direct manner and in a public assembly, announced his conviction that a particular council had actually erred. Yea, he had made this assertion against the famous Council of Constanz, and with reference to teachings that had been espoused by the Bohemian heretics, whom the entire Catholic Church hated and execrated. To measure the full import of this statement of Luther and the moral struggle which must have preceded it in Luther's soul, we must bear in mind that Luther had always regarded the epithet of "Bohemian" as a most opprobrious term, and had perceptibly winced under the indictment that he was spreading Bohemian poison. That charge he considered a most vicious calumny.

However, Eck's purpose now was to exhibit Luther in the most evident manner as a Bohemian ally, and to force him to utter statements by which he would renounce, not only the authoritative declarations of the pope, but also the authority of the representative councils of the Church. It goes without saying that Luther's reply, given to Eck without a moment's hesitation, created a tremendous sensation. Duke George was present when Luther spoke of the Christian teachings of Hus. Putting his arms akimbo, and shaking his head, he exclaimed in a loud voice that could be heard by the whole audience, "The pest take the man!"

Continuing his argument, Eck stated that this very tendency, *viz.*, claiming to understand Holy Writ better than the popes, councils, doctors, and universities, was a criterion

of Bohemianism. It was shocking, he said, to pious ears to hear the reverend father Luther boldly speak against the holy Council of Constanz, which had represented the united mind of all Christendom. At this point Luther seems to have been startled at observing the scope that could be given to his former statements. He interrupted Eck with the exclamation, "It is not so that I have spoken against the Council of Constanz." When Eck said the excommunicated Bohemians would, without doubt, claim Luther for their patron, and would draw the conclusion that, if the council had erred in one point, its authority was shaken also in other points, Luther cried out, before Eck had finished this sentence, "That is an impudent lie!" Plainly Luther had not anticipated the dangerous turn which the debate had taken, nor was he at that moment quite clear in his own mind to what extent he might admit an illumination from on high and a corresponding authority to church-councils, some of which he, too, held in very great respect. Of one thing, however, he was certain, *viz.*, he could not depart from the truth which he had found in Scripture to please even a council of the Church, nor could he, at the behest of a council, accept dogmas that are not founded on Scripture.

On the day following, Luther took up the issue once more, and now named four Scriptural claims of Hus that had been rejected by the Council of Constanz while they were unimpeachable, chiefly, Hus's claim concerning the Church: "There is one holy, universal Church, which is the sum total of the elect." Luther had discovered in this claim of Hus his own view of what constitutes the Church. Agreeably to this view he held, on the one hand, that subjection to Rome is not required for membership in the Church, and, on the other hand, that only genuine Christians, partakers of salvation, are the true members of the Church. However, Luther sought to guard this declaration by adding that no one could say the Council of Constanz had declared all the propositions of Hus heretical, but had only declared that some of them

were erroneous and not well considered. Yea, he held that Eck must concede the possibility that the respective statements in the protocol of the council might be interpolations fabricated by falsifiers of the records. It is easy to see that Luther struggled against the necessity of renouncing the authority of councils, toward which his opponent was ruthlessly pressing him. But even in this declaration Luther, with the utmost definiteness, returned to his old standpoint, *viz.*, that only the Scriptures can be regarded as infallible, while any council might err.

During the course of the debate, on July 7, Luther seems to have made a concession which renders his former statement concerning councils questionable. Eck had asserted that the Church, in convention assembled in the name of the Lord, and by reason of the New Testament promise, can be sure of being endowed with the divine Spirit and light from on high, and that, hence, all the decrees of a council in matters of faith must be valid; an erring council would lose the character of a gathering of the Church, etc. In his reply Luther accepted Eck's position, "that the decrees of councils, in so far as they relate to matters of faith, must in every case (*omni modo*) be accepted." However, he reserved the right to say that "a council may occasionally have erred, and occasionally can err, especially in matters not pertaining to faith; also, that no council has authority to set up new articles of faith."

This reservation of Luther has perplexed many. What did Luther mean by it? asks Koestlin, and suggests as a possible thought in Luther's mind at the time this, that God would not suffer a council to fall into error in such matters at any rate as, because of their bearing on men's salvation, must necessarily become embodied in the faith of all Christians. However, Koestlin is forced to reject this explanation at once in view of the exact terms of Luther's reservation: by contending that councils are apt to err "especially" in

matters not pertaining to faith Luther had not admitted that councils are immune from error in matters pertaining to faith. In the event, however, that councils should declare something to be *de fide* of which Luther was convinced that it could not be proved from Scripture to be an integral part of the doctrine of faith, he would still refuse to accept the decrees of the councils. Luther reiterated his belief that nothing could by a decree of a council be made to exist by divine right what was not in itself divinely right.

Accordingly, Eck never regarded these statements of Luther as a reversal of his position and a return to the standpoint of the Roman Church, and made no effort to hold him to those statements. "If you believe," he said, "that a lawfully assembled council can err and has erred, you are to me a heathen man and a publican." Luther, on the other hand, met the continued harangue of his zealous opponent in defense of the dignity and authority of the Council of Constance with the simple challenge: the worthy Doctor would first have to prove to him that a council could not err and had not erred.¹⁹⁾

To the psychologist the events of July 5—7, 1519, represent an intensely interesting study: the external struggle with his wily opponent is as nothing compared with Luther's internal struggle, by which a noble evangelical thought sought to liberate itself from the strong fetters in which respect for established human authority in the Church had bound it. Luther's moments of hesitation, cautious admissions, and reservations during the debate with Eck are the normal movements of a mind that is about to settle down on a new base, but is not quite ready to quit the old. The ghost of Hus was stalking in the hall of the Pleissenburg: Eck saw him extending the hand of fellowship to Luther; Luther fled from him, but gave a few fingers to him.

19) Koestlin, 1, 246 f. Kolde, 1, 206 f. Hausrath, 1, 299 f. Buchwald, 151.

5.

The charge of Hussism which Eck had hurled at Luther raised echoes in many quarters that did not soon die. We shall hear them again at other decisive moments of the Reformer's life. One that proved very annoying reached Luther five weeks after the Leipzig Debate. Jerome Emser, whose general characteristic was duplicity,²⁰⁾ had been allied with Eck in the debate. Luther's remarks about some of the teachings of Hus, and current rumors that the Bohemians were manifesting a great deal of interest in Luther, caused Emser, on August 13, to publish a letter addressed to John Zack, Administrator of the Catholic Church at Prague and Provost of Leitmeritz. In this letter he bewails the unfortunate Bohemians because they have fallen away from Rome, and wishes Zack God-speed in his efforts to bring the erring Bohemians back into the safe port. Incidentally Emser drops a remark that possibly the Bohemians might claim that they were not alone, but that from among Catholic Christianity Dr. Luther, an expert in elucidating the dark meaning of Holy Writ, had championed their cause. Emser also notes that during the Leipzig Debate the Bohemians had held daily services, and offered up public prayers in behalf of Luther. He expresses pity for Luther, if the latter should rely on the force of such damnable and abominable prayers in his conflict. But he also asserts that Luther had persistently repelled every suspicion that was expressed as to his Hussite leaning. He had at no point raised such a vigorous protest against Eck, as when the latter declared Luther—whether in jest or earnest, Emser claims not to know—a patron of the Bohemians; yea, he had with a loud voice condemned their defection from the papal see. Thus this man of rare learning had utterly frustrated the hope which the Bohemians might have conceived about him; for he had declared that we must not permit anything to disrupt our communion with Christ and the Church.

20) Kawerau, *Hieronymus Emser*. Hausrath, I, 314.

In answer to the assertion that Luther had endorsed at least some of the teachings of Hus as Christian, Emser notes that it has ever been a characteristic of heretics to mingle truth with error, and that they were never condemned for the truth which they held, but for their falseness and stubbornness. Hence Luther was justified in acknowledging what was right even in a heretic's teaching. However, as regards the view which Luther held in common with Hus, *viz.*, that the papal supremacy was not ordained of God, Emser informs the world that this point still remains unsettled between the disputants, and surely, Luther would not be so stubborn as not to yield to a thorough refutation of his view. Granted, however, that the papal monarchy exists only by human right, even in that case Luther had admitted that it was God's will that the authority of the pope should be obeyed. Emser adds his own view of the point in controversy to this effect: Christianity without a divinely ordained pope would be in a sorry state, yea, less well constituted in its religion than pagans and Jews; for even pagans derived their priesthood from the gods, and the archiepiscopate of Aaron was unquestionably ordained by God.

Luther was not a moment in the dark about the hostile intent of this cunningly contrived epistle: it was to force upon him the alternative either to renounce, from fear of the fatal alliance with the Bohemians, the position which he had maintained at Leipzig, or to take upon himself the full odium of being a supporter of the Bohemian schismatics and heretics. While acting as public apologist for Luther, Emser had artfully set forth the Bohemian interest and hopes as centered in Luther, and the calamity that was to be feared for the Catholic Church of Bohemia. Luther, always frank and open-hearted toward friend and foe, scorned the insidious attempt which a small mind had craftily made to entrap him. He smashed the dilemma that had been created for him by a scathing rebuke of Emser's duplicity, whom he compares to Joab, the assassin of Abner and Amasa, and whose specious encomiums he calls kisses of Judas. To permit such a man to

praise him, to make explanations for him, would be equivalent to surrendering the doctrine which he had defended, while the general public would certainly believe him a Bohemian, and in addition an ingrate, if he attacked the kind and considerate Emser. Luther boldly chose the latter course: he will not withdraw any statement that he has made merely because it has pleased the Bohemians. Mockingly he draws from the claim that whatever pleases the Bohemians is heretical the following conclusions: Whoever likes anything Bohemian, *e. g.*, Bohemian gold, a pretty Bohemian damsel,—these thrusts were aimed at known immoralities of Emser,—is a heretic. Inversely, whatever is despised by Bohemians is truly Catholic, *e. g.*, the lechery, pride, and greed of the Roman clergy, which the Bohemians abominate. While still deprecating any real error harbored by the Bohemians and any schism that might have been caused thereby, Luther in defiance of the mean tricks of Emser winds up with this declaration: "I will, I wish, I pray to God, I thank God, and I rejoice that my teaching pleases the Bohemians; would that it would please also Jews and Turks, yea, even you and Eck, and that you would renounce your impious errors!"²¹⁾

Thus Luther wrested himself free from any unjustified horror of Bohemianism which still obsessed him, threatening to paralyze his strength as a teacher of the truth, and risked the opprobrium which misinformed public opinion, blind ignorance, and malice might heap upon him.

6.

Eck and Emser had not exaggerated when they pointed to Bohemian admiration for Luther. A person's enemies, as a rule, perceive more quickly than the person himself whether he is making friends. The first direct evidence of the sympathetic interest which Bohemians were taking in his stand against Rome was not received by Luther until October 3, 1519. It came in the form of letters and gifts from John Poduschka

21) Koestlin, 1, 260 f. Hausrath, 1, 314 f. Buchwald, 155.

and Wenzel Rosdalowsky, ministers at Prague, both belonging to the Utraquist party, which insisted on giving the cup to laymen at communion, and rejected the supreme authority of the pope as a matter of principle. The letters and presents had been sent immediately after the Leipzig Debate, but Luther did not receive them until the later date, and, even then, only through the agency of the Saxon court. The Bohemians wished Luther God-speed, and thanked Heaven for him and his successful labors. Poduschka's gift consisted of some knives, Rosdalowsky's, of something that Luther valued more highly: Hus's treatise *De Ecclesia*, which he had not known at the time of the Leipzig Debate, and which he promptly had reprinted as soon as he had read it.²²⁾ Rosdalowsky wrote, amongst other things: "What Hus was in Bohemia, you, Luther, are in Saxony." Luther's answer was composed by Melancthon. Luther thought the style of his Bohemian correspondents Erasmian, and wanted his reply to be equally refined and ornate. He reciprocated the gift from Bohemia by sending his new friends at Prague all the smaller writings which he had published up to that time.

In the meantime Luther was studying Hus's treatise *On the Church*, and the result of this study was soon communicated to his intimate friend Spalatin, to whom Luther wrote in the early part of 1520: "Without being aware of it, I have hitherto proclaimed and contended for all the doctrines of Hus; John Staupitz likewise. We are all Hussites without knowing it; in the end Paul and Augustine, too, are Hussites to the letter. Behold the monstrous teachings we have espoused independently of this Bohemian leader and teacher! I stand aghast with amazement and do not know what to think when I reflect on the terrible judgment of God on mankind, because the manifest truth of the Gospel has been burned, and stands condemned publicly these hundred years, and no one dare speak out against it. Woe to our country!"²³⁾

22) It appeared at Wittenberg, 1520.

23) Koestlin, 1, 272 f. 294 f. Kolde, 1, 240 f. 295.

7.

In August, 1520, Luther published his epochal *Appeal to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*. In this treatise Luther proposes remedies for many evils which the religion of Romanism had wrought in the Church and State of Germany. In the twenty-fourth section he discusses the relation of the Church to the Bohemian Hussites. "It is high time," he says, "that we earnestly take up the cause of the Bohemians with a view to unite with them, in order that the abominable vituperation, hatred, and envy on their side and ours may cease." To this end he demands, first of all, that the Catholic Church acknowledge without reserve that the burning of Hus at Constanz was wrong. Luther waives judgment on the contents of Hus's propositions, though he avers that he has found no error in his writings. However, he insists that wrong was done to Hus when the imperial safe-conduct which had been granted him was withdrawn; for everybody knows that it is a violation of God's command to act faithlessly to a person who trusts himself to your authority, no matter whether this be done to a heretic; for even the devil would be entitled to safe-conduct if it had been promised to him. In general, Luther denounces the burning of heretics: they ought to be overcome with arguments, not with fire. "If that were a great achievement to overcome heretics with fire, hangmen would be the most learned doctors on earth." In the second place, Luther suggests that an attempt be made by some pious and reasonable bishops and theologians to unite the Bohemians (who were divided into a number of sects), and that out of regard for the welfare of their souls the pope should for a time renounce his authority over them, and permit them, in accordance with the ruling of the Nicene Council, to elect from among themselves some one to be Archbishop of Prague, and authorize some neighboring bishop in Moravia, Hungary, Poland, or Germany to install him. Moreover, the Bohemians must not be forced to give up the cup at the communion of their laymen; their new bishop must only see to it that those

who use the cup, and those who do not use it, are mutually tolerant and patient. This advice of Luther is remarkable, because he refrains from demanding the cup at lay communion. In a sermon on the Sacrament which he had published a short time before issuing his *Appeal*, he had made this demand. Luther even hopes to win back to the Church the Beghardines or Picardines, the society of the Bohemian Brethren, who were known to detest more intensely than the rest of their countrymen the errors of Roman teaching and the practises of the Roman priesthood. Luther had formerly expressed pity for these "poor heretics," and had rejected their teaching regarding the Lord's Supper. In the aforementioned *Sermon on the Sacrament* he had related that he had seen a book used by the Beghardines in which they denied the real presence of the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and a few other matters of heretical character. In the meantime Senior Lucas, of Prague, probably in answer to Luther's *Sermon*, had issued a treatise on the Sacrament, which caused Luther to change his mind regarding the Beghardines. For in the *Appeal* he declares: "If I knew that the Beghardines cherished no error beyond their belief that true, natural bread and wine are found in the Lord's Supper, while they admit that the true body and blood of Christ are present under the bread and wine, I would not reject them, but suffer them to come under the pastoral care of the Bishop of Prague." To the surprise of the Catholic world Luther, in this connection, declares the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation no article of faith, but a notion of St. Thomas and the pope. All that he now claims to be an article of faith is, that in the natural bread and wine there is also the natural, true body and blood of Christ. However, Luther's views of this matter had not yet reached the form of a conviction; for he declares at the same time that communicants might also believe, without danger to their souls, that there is no bread at all in communion, the bread namely having been changed into the body of Christ, as Rome teaches.²⁴⁾

24) Koestlin, 1, 327. Kolde, 1, 264. Buchwald, 177.

Thus the Bohemian situation had come to be embodied in Luther's reformatory program, and Luther henceforth appears almost as the determined avenger of Hus. When, in January, 1521, he published his *Assertion* against Pope Leo X, in which he maintained every article which had been condemned by the papal bull that had been issued against him, he declared, amongst other things, that he must recant some of his former statements. This is one of his "recantations": he withdraws the statement that *some* of the propositions drawn from Hus's writings which the Council of Constanz had condemned were Christian, and he wants to substitute for that statement this other, *viz.*, that *all* those propositions were Christian, and the pope and the papists had, by condemning Hus, condemned the holy Gospel, and put in its place the doctrine of the hellish dragon.²⁵⁾

8.

If Rome could have swayed the Emperor and the civil authorities of Germany in 1521 as it had done in 1415, the Diet of Worms would have been marked with an *auto da fé* as was the Council of Constanz, and Luther would have been the victim. In his bull *Decet Romanum Pontificem*, of January 3, 1521, the Pope had denounced Luther as "a declared heretic." Excommunication, the papal anathema, the eternal curse, the interdict, and every secular punishment which the canons of the Church decreed for heretics, had been denounced against Luther. Rome was preparing public opinion for its final blow. In his speech before the Diet of Worms, on February 13, the papal legate Alexander consumed three hours in explaining the dangerous character of Luther's teaching to the members of the Diet. The point to which he recurred again and again, and which he stressed to the utmost, was Luther's revival of Hussism. Like the Bohemians in a former age Luther had risen in rebellion against the laws of the Church and the Empire; he had summoned Hus and Jerome of Prague

25) Koestlin, 1, 377. Buchwald, 193.

from hell back to earth; he was uttering blasphemies against the Council of Constanz, yea, he scorned all the holy councils, and, though appealing his cause to a council, he was determined not to submit to the council's decrees. Aleander protested against such a man being heard at all by the Diet, and against laymen sitting in judgment on his case. He demanded that Luther's writings be ordered burned, and with a discreet moderation, prompted by political reflections, refrained from saying what was to be done with Luther's person.

As regards the burning of Luther's writings, Aleander carried his point: on March 26, an imperial edict was published at Worms commanding all who possessed writings of Luther to give them up to the authorities. Luther's friends were thrown into consternation. They regarded this edict as a sure sign that Luther's destruction had been planned, and sent warnings to Luther not to come to Worms, as he had been ordered to do. One of these warnings reached Luther as he was leaving Frankfurt, and was within a few days' journey from Worms; it came from his trusted friend Spalatin, and asked him to remember the fate of Hus.

In his last defense before the Diet, on April 18, Luther was once more pitted against the man who, two years ago, had fastened the opprobrious name of "Hussite" on him: Dr. Eck. After Luther's famous oration before the Diet, and while the princes were deliberating on a proper reply to Luther, the Emperor directed Eck to address Luther. With haughty scorn Eck declared that there was no need to join with Luther in a debate on the correctness of his teaching, since all his teachings had been previously judged at the trials of Wyclif, Hus, and other heretics, and had on sufficient grounds been condemned at the Council of Constanz by the Pope, the Emperor, and the assembled Fathers. That was sufficient. Luther must acknowledge that God had not given over His Church to error all these years. If any person who contradicts decrees of the councils and of the Church, were to demand that he be refuted with arguments from Scripture, there would be

an end of authority in the Christian Church and no basis for the certainty of any one's faith. If Luther should choose to recant such of his teachings as had been condemned at the trial of Hus, the Emperor might deal leniently with his other writings; if not, all his other writings, though they might be quite Christian in character, deserved no consideration. He demanded from Luther an answer "without horns and with no cloak thrown around." The world knows Luther's "unhorned" and "uncloaked" reply.

During the eight days until his departure from Worms on April 26, Luther was made aware that attempts were being made to annul the imperial safe-conduct, which guaranteed him safe passage to and from Worms. One day Cochlaeus, a Leipzig theologian, had approached Luther while he was engaged with a delegation of the Diet, and had proposed a joint debate on condition that Luther should forfeit his safe-conduct in the event that the judges for the debate should decide against him. The proposal exasperated a nobleman who happened to be present so much that he threatened violence to Cochlaeus. Chancellor Brueck of Saxony had during the Diet expressed the fear that Luther's safe-conduct might be withdrawn, and it is known that Charles V had been advised that he need not keep a promise given to a heretic. But the Emperor had too much regard for his personal honor and his conscience, and, besides, understood the temper of the German nation too well to act upon the suggestion. Rome's second goose-roasting was foiled; the eagle returned to his eyrie in the Thuringian Forest.

But even in his exile at the Wartburg the shades of Hus were hovering about him. Annually on Maundy Thursday there is recited at Rome the *Bulla Coena Domini*, which contains a catalog of all the principal heresies that have been condemned by the popes. Since 1521, Luther's name was inserted in the bull immediately after the names of Wyclif and Hus.²⁶⁾

26) Koestlin, 1, 391. 407 f. 418. 429. 450. Kolde, 1, 305. 335. 342. 347. Buchwald, 202 ff. Hausrath, 1, 383 f.

9.

Since 1521, Luther's spiritual kinship with Hus may be regarded as an acknowledged fact, accepted by Luther himself.

Events that were transpiring in Bohemia soon brought him into the closest connection with the anti-Rome church parties in Hus's land. The majority of these Bohemian malcontents were Utraquists. Their interest in Luther's conflict with Rome was at first almost limited to one point: Luther's contention that laymen ought to receive the cup at communion. They esteemed this privilege much more highly than Luther himself. But in the doctrine of the Mass, Transubstantiation, the Seven Sacraments, Fasts, etc., they sided with the Catholic Church. Quite an embarrassment was created for them by their belief that priests that had not been consecrated by a bishop could not validly officiate in the ordinances of the Church. The archiepiscopate of Prague remaining vacant, they sent their candidates for holy orders to Italian bishops, who would, as a rule, impart to them the sacrament of ordination only on receiving from the ordained the promise that they would not give to laymen the communion cup when they returned to their home country. This promise they had to recant at home, and thus they entered upon their ministerial work with a violated conscience. To overcome this difficulty, attempts at reaching an understanding with the papal see in the form of a compromise were made repeatedly; but all failed.

But Bohemia gradually came to value Luther for more than his defense of the lay cup at communion. Luther's treatise on *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, this gigantic onslaught on the tyranny of Rome, opened the eyes of the Bohemians, and they began to realize that their opposition to Rome must assume larger dimensions. Their young King Louis, on coming of age in 1522, convened the estates of the kingdom for a national conference. Luther received information that pressure was being brought to bear on the Convention of the Estates at Prague to cause Bohemia to return to the bosom of the "alone-saving Church." At the same time King

Henry VIII of England was spreading the rumor afresh that Luther was on the point of fleeing to Bohemia. At this juncture Luther issued two writings, one addressed to Count Schlick, a wealthy nobleman residing near the border of Bohemia, in which he dedicated to this Bohemian his reply to the British monarch, the other addressed directly to the convention at Prague. He urged the convention to remain firm, and not to do anything by which they might bring shame on their martyrs, Hus and Jerome. Referring to the rumor that he was about to flee to Bohemia, and that he was by birth a Bohemian, Luther declared that for a long time he had indeed desired to pay Bohemia a visit, because he wished very much to learn to know the Bohemian people and their faith. By such a visit he hoped to incense the mad papists still more, in accordance with what is written Deut. 32, 21 and Rom. 10, 19: "I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." He desired to raise the name of Bohemia to great honor, and cause the name of the papists to be abhorred in all the world. While deprecating a premature union between Bohemia and Germany, he hoped that such a union would speedily be brought about with the help of God, and that mutual forbearance would be practised with this end in view. The amalgamation of the various Bohemian sects, which was expected to take place as soon as Bohemia returned to the papal fold, Luther declared, could only be effected by the pure preaching of the Gospel.

Not long after this there came to Wittenberg Gallus Cahera, an energetic, ambitious, but insincere clergyman, who belonged to the Utraquist party. He described the state of affairs in Bohemia in such a way that Luther was led to believe the evangelical cause had a far better chance to succeed in Bohemia than he had imagined. Incidentally Cahera succeeded in convincing Luther that he, Cahera, would be an excellent agent for spreading the Gospel in Bohemia. Accordingly, in November, 1523, Luther addressed to the city council

and the congregation at Prague his treatise on *The Ordination of Ministers*. He calls attention to the great embarrassment and danger arising to the Bohemians from their belief that they must have their ministers ordained by Roman bishops. That is the reason, he thinks, why so many wolves enter their fold. It would be better for them to have no ministers at all. The heads of families might teach the Gospel to their households, and baptize their infants. Papal ordination is not necessary; it is a jugglery, by which Christians ought not to permit themselves to be imposed upon. In order to obtain true ministers of the Word, they must remember that all the rights of the Church are vested in the believers, who are a general priesthood, and who appoint ministers to exercise in their stead the functions of the ministry. He offers to the city council this direct advice: relying on the promise of the Lord that, where two or three are gathered together in His name, He would be in their midst, they should present this important business before Him in prayer; next, they should call a meeting of all who think as they do in this matter, elect worthy and able persons for the ministerial office, authorize their prominent men to lay hands on them and present them before the congregation. These are to serve as their bishops, ministers, and pastors. Not that he wished to make this a law for all Bohemia; no, a single congregation might adopt this plan, and others would follow. The Bohemian Diet might deliberate on the question whether this method should be adopted for the whole country. However, if any should refuse to adopt this method, they must not be coerced. Moreover, Luther makes a concession to the Bohemians in view of a possible weakness of their faith: if they believe the papal sanction for their priests necessary, they might obtain it from a man like Cahera, who had been duly ordained in the Roman Church. He could act in the place of a Roman bishop in ordaining their ministers.

This treatise and letter secured for Cahera the pastorate of the congregation at Prague. It also brought about an understanding of the Utraquist party of Prague with the Bohemian

brethren, and Bohemian schisms seemed about to disappear. The Utraquist Estates of Bohemia in February, 1524, appointed Cahera their administrator, promised protection to every priest proclaiming the pure Gospel, recommended the reading of the Bible to laymen, and ordered the writings of Hus, who had to the end adhered to the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, to be received only as far as they agreed with the Holy Scriptures. However, a speedy reversal of public opinion caused a bitter disappointment to Luther. It soon became apparent that in his specious zeal in behalf of the Gospel Cahera was really striving for his own aggrandizement. In order to increase his power and rise to still higher distinction, he entered into negotiations with the Catholics with the view of reuniting Bohemia under the papal see. National feelings, too, were roused by Czechs, who declined to be influenced by the German Luther, and who, as a pretext, asserted that they chose to abide by the accepted teachings of the church-fathers rather than follow the new and foreign doctrines that had been imported among them. This party gained a political victory at the election of the city council of Prague and at the Diet of 1525. They enacted their sentiments into law, prohibited priests who were not properly ordained from officiating, expelled preachers who were known to have Lutheran propensities, and imprisoned the Chancellor of Prague, Burian von Kornitz, who was a devoted friend of Luther. Yea, to spite Luther more than to please Rome the Bohemians did a thing unheard of till then: they expressed to the papal legate their willingness to submit to Rome, if only the lay cup at communion were conceded them, and the clergy would renounce their claims for secular dominion. Rome, of course, did not entertain these propositions. In vain Luther remonstrated to Cahera, and earnestly chided him for his defection.

His acquaintance with the Bohemians drew from Luther another treatise, that *On the Veneration of the Sacrament of the Body of Our Lord*, which was published in April, 1523.

It was addressed to that party among the Bohemian brethren who were known as the Beghardines. They were a fraternal society of men whose chief aim appears to have been to re-establish Christianity in its pure apostolic form. Their lives were regulated by faith in Christ, mutual love, obedience to God in strict accordance with the teachings and directions of Holy Writ. It was a practical sort of Christianity which they wished to inaugurate. By a literal interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount they renounced most secular pursuits, possessions, and honors, also mere secular learning, and subjected their members to strict discipline. For their priests they retained the state of celibacy. The doctrines of justification and Christian liberty, as Luther proclaimed them, were unknown to them. Luther had at one time expressed his doubt whether the doctrine of the Lord's Supper which the Beghardines taught was Scriptural. Luther had always believed in the Real Presence, though he had rejected the scholastic teaching of transubstantiation. The reports which he had received regarding the Beghardines led him to believe that they admitted only a spiritual presence of the Lord in the Sacrament. In 1522, his friend Paul Speratus, who had labored in Moravia, wrote Luther, praising the zeal in behalf of the Gospel and the quiet, clean living of the Beghardines, but stating that he questioned the orthodoxy of their doctrine of the Lord's Supper. He sent Luther eleven articles (*Conclusiones Beghardorum*), which had confessional authority among the Beghardines, and asked a theological opinion on them. About the same time Johann Horn, a Beghardine priest, happened to be at Leipzig, and Luther interviewed him regarding the eucharistic teaching of his society. He received from Horn a statement which satisfied him: the Beghardines did not consider the Lord's Supper a mere symbolical action, but believed in the real presence of the Lord at communion, although their manner of stating and proving this presence differed from Luther's. He informed Speratus to this effect, and received

from him another set of questions regarding the Lord's Supper, which the author of the first Bohemian grammar, Benedict Optatus, had compiled. One of these questions was, whether Christ was to be worshiped in the Sacrament. In his reply, on June 13, Luther declared the questions useless, and warned against them; however, he held that Christ might, or might not, be worshiped in the Sacrament without sin; all would depend on the faith of the individual. Since Horn had promised to send Luther a more authentic statement regarding the doctrines of the Beghardines than he had obtained in the eleven articles sent by Speratus, the venerable Senior of the Beghardines, Lukas, was now induced to send Luther an *Account* of their teachings, which he inscribed, *On Victorious Truth*, also the Latin apology of this *Account* of 1511. Luther was, in the main, pleased with the contents of these writings, but he criticized the Beghardine form of infant baptism, and the rebaptizing which they administered to adults when receiving them into fellowship. He complained about their lack of clearness in their teaching regarding faith and works. As regards the Lord's Supper, he said that, unless they were juggling their terms, their statements were satisfactory. The eleven *Conclusiones Beghardorum* had been declared unauthentic by Lukas. In the meantime Luther had, in a catechism of the Beghardines, seen the statement that Christ is to be worshiped only in as far as He is at the right hand of His Father in glory, and that we must not heed those who point to the Sacrament, saying: Lo, here! True, some editions of the catechism, he was told, did not contain these words; in others they had been changed so as to make them conform to Lutheran teaching. Still Luther's suspicion about the Bohemian doctrine of the Sacrament was now aroused, and when, moreover, information reached him from Prague that he was quoted by the Beghardines as one who also rejected the worship of Christ in the Eucharist, he considered it necessary to explain his position. A sermon which he had

preached January 4th was expanded into the treatise which we noted above.

This treatise is remarkable, inasmuch as it foreshadows Luther's later arguments against the Sacramentarians. He rejects a figurative interpretation of the words of institution, and insists on the real presence of Christ's body and blood. On the question whether Christ should be worshiped in the Eucharist he approaches the Bohemian position by declaring such worship a free exercise of faith, and placing it on a level with showing proper respect for the presence of Christ on other occasions, *e. g.*, for His presence in a believing person, who for that reason should be treated with Christian courtesy. But he emphasizes as the thing of chief importance in the Sacrament what Christ does for us, not what we do for Him. Continuing, Luther criticizes the Bohemians because they baptize their infants, not on a present faith which they possess, but on a faith which they are to obtain at some future time. He is also displeased with their contempt of secular learning, especially of the study of the ancient languages. On the other hand, he acknowledges their "fine Christian customs," their systematic care of the poor, their clean living, and acknowledges that in this respect the Germans are still deficient. He expresses the hope that by a further exchange of writings, and by mutually sharing what is good on either side, they would approach each other more closely in the future.

This treatise was translated into the Bohemian language and widely circulated. But it met with a cool reception by Lukas, who felt offended at the criticism administered to his party, and he composed an answer in Bohemian which was interpreted to Luther in October, 1523. It had a chilling effect on the kindly affections which Luther had begun to cherish for the "Bohemian brethren." But in the hope for a turn to the better in his affairs with the Beghardines he refrained from further writings against them.²⁷⁾

27) Koestlin, I, 629 ff.

10.

Luther's love for Hus was manifested by a few minor incidents. In his liturgical labors about 1524, when he was arranging the evangelical order of worship, and translating and composing the hymns that were to be sung by evangelical Germany, he embodied in his hymnal Hus's communion hymn, "Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior." Thus he taught the new evangelical church of his country to strike hands and join in a glad chorus of sacred melody on the basis of a common faith, at least in one of the evangelical teachings, with the despised Bohemians.

During the memorable days at Augsburg, in 1530, Luther was, for the second time in his life, an exile at Castle Coburg. He was in almost daily epistolary communication with Melancthon and the other evangelical representatives at the Diet. He learned of their fears and doubts and misgivings, and in his first letter to his colleague and friend he reproves them by citing to them the example of Hus. "My dear Philip," he writes, "I am thoroughly disgusted with the miserable fears which, you say, are consuming you. That these fears are dominating in your breast is not owing to the greatness of our cause, but to the greatness of our unbelief. Hus's cause was identical with ours, and he and many others were in a greater predicament. No matter how great our stress, He, who has begun this thing, and is guiding it, is still greater; for our cause is His. If we are wrong, we shall recant; if we are right, shall we make Him a liar in His promises who wants us to be at ease in the midst of troubles, like persons sleeping? For He says: 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord.' Does He say that to the winds or brutes? I, too, am seized with trembling occasionally, but it does not last. It is your philosophy, not your theology, that is making you afraid."

A few years later, while preparations were being made for a General Council of the Church, Luther was asked by his friend Anton Corvinus to write the preface to a critique,

by Corvinus, of a treatise of Erasmus as to what ought to be the attitude of Catholics and Evangelicals towards the council. By this time Luther had formed the settled opinion that Erasmus was an Epicurean and indifferentist in matters of faith. There is only one bright spot in the man's record: his statement that the Council of Constanz had only burned, but not convicted, Hus.²⁸⁾

11.

The last significant manifestation of Luther's relation to Hus occurred in connection with these preparations for a General Council of the Church. In 1536 and 1537, Luther published two editions of a treatise embodying letters of Hus. This treatise was a practical warning to the coming Council, telling Rome that it might again try to throttle the truth as the Council of Constanz had done, but that they would not succeed. These letters form a fitting conclusion of this investigation and a tribute to the Czech reformer.

In his Preface to these letters Luther says: "I have had these letters of Magister Johann Hus translated into Latin for me, out of the Bohemian, in order to have them published, especially now that, owing to the insistence of our beloved lord, Emperor Charles, a council has been summoned. My intention was not so much to excite sore feelings and enmity against the Council of Constanz,—I have gladly done this heretofore, and shall always be ready to do this with all my heart, because of its shameless, accursed act, and as a necessary defense of myself and the entire Christian Church,—as rather to warn those who ought to heed warning to be careful at this new council, if God permits it to be held, not to follow the example of the Council of Constanz. Truth was there met with violence, and has been thus combated ever since, but now truth has conquered and bears her head erect; she is making a show of this riotous council publicly, and has bravely stripped it of its tyrannous power.

28) Koestlin, I, 537, 9; II, 213. 312. Kolde, II, 216.

“The principal business at that council, at least as the cardinals and men of high estate viewed it, was to remove the schism in the Church. Matters of faith they left these desperate and mean fellows whom we call monks and sophists to deal with. From these, who were the elders, proceeded at that time the iniquity of Babylon, as the prophet has predicted, and in its wake came misery, war, battles, bloodshed, and such hatred as will never be appeased, throughout Germany and Bohemia.

“Still, after recovering from the schism, the papacy was not idle, but has ever since filled all the churches in the entire world with its monstrous lies, indulgences, traffic of masses, and the merchandise of good works, which the priests and monks offered for sale at their fair. Such were the fruits of that most holy council.

“Accordingly, it will never do that we leave these diabolical heads to decide on matters of faith, but the kings, princes, and bishops will have to take matters in their own hands, lest the present council result in similar or worse outrages. God has surely shown by the example of the Council of Constanz that He resisteth the proud, and scattereth them that are of a haughty spirit. He does not regard the greatness of any person.

“The reason, therefore, why I am publishing these letters is to utter the following warning: Whoever will not become wise after having been burned so many times, may go to the devil. He will perish without my fault. Our dear Lord Jesus Christ grant us His Spirit to the end that we may pray for, and to those who are to preside at the council that they may seek, the things that are God's, and forget and cast aside their own things. Amen.”

This vigorous preface introduces the following letters of Hus:—

“I, Magister Johann Hus, confident that I am a servant of God, wish to all who love God with their whole heart the grace of God.

"I have deemed it necessary, my dear brethren in Christ, to urge you to reflect that the books which I wrote in Bohemian have been condemned as heretical by the Council of Constanz, which is filled with haughtiness, greed, and all manner of abomination. They have done this without ever having seen or read my books; or if they have read them, they have not understood them. For this council is composed of Wallonians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Spaniards, Germans, and people of other countries. The only persons who may have understood my books are the Bishop of Leitomischl and a few other Bohemians, who are priests in Prague. These were present at the meeting, but were foremost in raising vile accusations both against the truth of God and our Bohemian country, which I sincerely believe to be full of God-fearing Christians, who love and cherish the Word of God and uprightness. If you had been present, you would have noticed the abominations and shameful practises of this council, of which, albeit it is called holy, and desires to be regarded as inerrant, I have heard that even the Suabians are saying that their city of Constanz will not be able in thirty years to make atonement for the shameful sins which have been committed by this council. In fine, everybody is scandalized by this council, and the people are grieved at seeing so much wickedness perpetrated.

"When I stood before the council the first time to defend myself against my adversaries, I noticed that there was no order. A great commotion and noisy cries that were uttered against me caused me to say I had expected to see more orderly and honest proceedings at this council. Then the presiding cardinal shouted at me, 'Is that the way you dare to speak here? At the castle your speech was more humble.' I replied, 'At the castle there was not such shouting against me, but now you are all shouting.'

"Now, since there has been no order at all at this council, and more harm than good has been done by its transactions, do not suffer yourselves, dear Christians and brethren, to be

terrified by the sentence that has been passed on my books. You will behold these men scattered like moths, and their teaching and judgments will be as frail as a spider's web. They did try by intimidation to induce me to let go of the truth as it is in Christ, but they could not overcome the strength of God that is in me. They never dared to enter into a Scriptural argument with me. I have as witnesses for this some high-born gentlemen, who became willing to suffer every ignominy for the truth of God and stood by me, especially the noble lords Wenzel von Duba and Johann von Chlum, whom Emperor Sigismund permitted to come into the council. Later, when I expressed my willingness to receive instruction if I had erred, the aforementioned lords heard the chief cardinal say to me, 'If you are willing to receive instruction, you will first have to recant all your teachings, as fifty doctors of theology'—they were mad sophists!—'shall recite them to you.' What do you think of that? Is not that a fine way of instructing an erring person? In a similar manner we read that St. Catherine was asked to forswear the truth and her faith in Christ, because fifty magisters were arrayed against her. But the pious virgin refused; she remained faithful unto death to Christ, and ultimately converted the fifty magisters. But I could not convert my opponents.

"I have desired to write you this, dear brethren, that you may know that I have not been attacked with Scripture or in some other proper way, but they have set upon me with threats and intimidation, demanding that I recant. But the merciful God, whose Word I have esteemed great and glorious, has been with me. He is still with me, and I confidently believe that He will continue to be with me, and will keep me in His grace.

"Given on Wednesday after the Day of John Baptist [June 26, 1415] in my prison, where I am awaiting death. However, God is keeping His counsel concerning me so secret that I cannot say that this letter will be my last; for the almighty God is still able to rescue me. Amen."

The following letter antedates the preceding one by two days:—

“I, Magister Johann Hus, confident that I am a servant of God, wish all believers who love God and His Word knowledge of the truth and the grace of God.

“Dear brethren, I have desired to admonish you not to be alarmed or terrified because my adversaries have decided to burn my books. Rather consider that the prophet Jeremiah was treated in like manner by his nation, and yet his preaching was not suppressed; for when they had burned his book, God commanded it to be rewritten, and that, in a more elaborate form. For while the prophet was in prison, he had with him his scribe Baruch, to whom he dictated his preaching, as we see either from the 35th or 45th chapter of Jeremiah. There is also a record in the Book of the Maccabees of the burning of the Bible and the slaughter of those with whom the Bible was found.

“Similar stories are told about tyrants after the birth of Christ, who burned the saints together with their books. Again, some cardinals burned the books of St. Gregory, and would not have left a single one to remain, if God had not interfered through Peter, Gregory's servant. Again, St. Chrysostom was condemned by two councils, and yet, after the holy man's death, the injustice of the sentence passed on him was brought to light.

“Remember these stories for a warning, lest from fear you omit reading my books or hand them over to my adversaries to be burned. Keep in mind for your strengthening the word which our Savior spoke Matt. 24: ‘There shall be before the last day great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.’ Heed this warning, dear brethren, and be not dismayed. I trust to God that the school of Antichrist will be afraid of you and will not trouble you, and the Council of Constanz will hardly extend its power to Bohemia. I be-

lieve there are many who will rather die than take my books from you. Yea, they will leave this council in confusion, scattered like storks, and will learn during winter what they did during summer.

“Behold, they have sentenced the pope, the head of the Church, to death because of his abominable sins. Where, now, are the pope’s advocates? Let those make answer who in their pulpits declaim that the pope is a God on earth; he cannot sell that which is holy. The jurists say that he is the head of the holy Christian Church, for he governs it; he is the heart of the Christian Church, for it is by him that the Church has spiritual life; he is the fountain from which springs every virtue and blessing; he is the sun of the holy Christian Church; he is the place of refuge for every Christian. Behold, this head is cut off with the sword; this God on earth has been put in fetters, and his sins are made manifest. This fountain is dried up, this sun has lost his luster, this heart has been plucked from the body and cast away, and no one can henceforth make him his refuge.²⁹⁾”

“The council has condemned the Pope for having sold indulgences, bishoprics, and church revenues, but among those who passed sentence on the Pope there were many who had bought these things from him and sold them to others. For Bishop John of Leitomischl, who was also present, twice wanted to buy the bishopric of Prague, but others came ahead of him. Are not these desperate knaves? They do not pluck the beam from their own eyes, though in their own canon law there is this rule: ‘Whoever buys a prelacy for money shall have it taken from him.’ Now, no matter whether there is any buying, or selling, or any other commercial transaction in these holy affairs, it shall stand condemned publicly. Thus Peter condemned and abominated Simon, who wanted to buy the Holy Ghost from him for money.

29) Pope John XXIII was deposed by the Council of Constanz; he fled from the council, was captured, imprisoned, and finally exiled.

“At this council, then, they have condemned and abominated the Pope for having engaged in such traffic, but those who have bought from him, and have tolerated such traffic, go scot-free. Yea, this traffic has been carried on at this very council; for there are two persons here, one of whom sold a bishopric which the other bought; the Pope, however, took money from both and sanctioned the sale. You know that such transactions occur also in Bohemia. Would that God had said to this council: He that is without sin among you, let him pass sentence on Pope John; no doubt, they would have slunk away one after the other. Why did they formerly bow to him, kiss his feet, and call him Most Holy, when they knew that he was a heretic, a murderer, and a notorious sinner, as they have proved him to be? Yea, why did the cardinals elect a new pope, of whom they knew that he had murdered his predecessor? Why did they permit him, after he had been elected pope, to traffic holy things again? For, being his advisers, they owe it to him to give him good counsel; failing in this, are they not as guilty as he, all the more because they have assisted him in many of his evil acts? Why did no one reprove him before the council was opened, but all revered him as the Most Holy? However, now that the secular authorities, by the disposition of divine providence, have put the Pope in prison, they all aid one another in having him put to death. Methinks that this business regarding the Pope, and other things that have happened at this council, show that the abominable, shameful rule of Antichrist has been exposed, and pious Christians will, no doubt, understand now what Christ meant when He said, Matt. 24: ‘When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place,—whoso readeth, let him understand.’ Methinks this overgreat pride, greed, and simony is the true abomination in the desolate place, that is, among the prelates, who are utterly void of godliness, humility, and other virtues.

“If I had the time, I should like to describe to you all the wiles and knavery which I am now made to suffer from

these men. Pious Christians would then be better prepared to guard against them. But I trust to God that He will raise up others after me, who shall do His work more valiantly. Even now there are some who will expose the knavery of Antichrist, and gladly give their lives for the truth of our Lord Christ, who will give to me and you the life everlasting.

“Given on the Day of John Baptist, in the prison and in bonds, and remembering that St. John lost his head in prison for the Word of God.”³⁰⁾

D.
