

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

VOL. XIX.

JULY, 1915.

No. 3.

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 Constanz to the men of Prague: "They have first laid snares and prepared citations and anathemas for a goose" (anser; "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." (*Eccl. Hist.*, 3, 428. See Kurtz, *Lehrb. d. K.-G.*, 1, 340.)

MATERIALS FOR THE CATECHIST.

FOURTH OUTLINE.

(Concluded.)

c. A gross form of idolatry occurs within the Christian Church of our day, *viz.*, the saint- and image-worship of the Roman Catholic Church. They claim, indeed, that they do not “adore” or “worship,” but merely “venerate” the saints, and whatever religious exercises they engage in are said to be performed, not to the painted or carved images, but to the saints themselves. The images are said to be merely aids to devotion, just like any other piece of statuary or other ornamentation in the churches. It must be granted that there is no law in Scripture forbidding the dedication of sculpture, or the pic-

torial, or any other art to sacred use in the sanctuary and at divine services. Nor is it wrong to keep the memory of departed saints alive among believers, and honor them by following their footsteps. This is even commanded Heb. 13, 7. But Roman Catholic practise is not as innocent as the public apologists for this Church would make it appear. While there may be individual Catholics who make a correct use of images in their churches, it is a fact that the ignorant masses of Catholicism actually worship images, and the Church not only connives at, but encourages this practise. What Luther relates of practises prevailing in his day can be duplicated in our day: "Consider what, in our blindness, we have hitherto been doing under the papacy. If any one had toothache, he fasted and honored St. Appollonia [macerated his flesh by voluntary fasting to the honor of St. Apollonia]; if he were afraid of fire, he sought St. Lawrence as his deliverer; if he dreaded pestilence, he made a vow to St. Sebastian or Rachio, and a countless number of such abominations, where every one selected his own saint whom he worshiped and invoked in distress." (*Large Cat.*, p. 392.)

d. Gross forms of idolatry that occur outside of the Christian Church, but are practised without any visible and material exhibitions of the Deity worshiped are:

a. The worship of such monotheistic religions as the Jews, Mohammedans, Unitarians, Masonry, with its many varieties in the lodges. Against all these must be urged, not only the Trinitarian texts of the Scriptures, but chiefly John 5, 23. This text most emphatically denies that a person who rejects Christ has the Father for his God, in short, that he has God. The true God is only He who has revealed Himself in Christ, and only through Christ can access be had to Him. Polytheism, antitrinitarian monotheism, theism, etc., are not various ways leading, all of them, to God, but they are paths leading away from God. Polytheists, etc., do *not* obey the law written in their hearts and the revelation vouchsafed them by the created universe, when they deny the Triune God, who was revealed to men from the beginning of the world.— (A practical rejection of the redeeming work of Christ may be numbered at this place with the gross forms of idolatry. Luther, who mentions it, however, declares the matter "slightly too subtle, and that cannot be comprehended by young pupils." He says: "There is also a false divine service and extreme idolatry, which we have hitherto practised, and is still prevalent in the world, upon which also all ecclesiastical orders are founded, and which alone concerns the conscience, that seeks in its own works help, consolation, and salvation, presumes to wrest heaven from God, and reckons how many institutions it has founded, how

often it has fasted, attended mass, etc. Upon such things it depends, and of them boasts, as though unwilling to receive anything from God gratuitously, but desires itself to earn them or merit them superabundantly, as though He were in our service and debt, and we His lord. What is this but reducing God to an idol, yea, a mere Pomona, and elevating and regarding ourselves as God?" (*Large Cat.*, p. 393.)

b. Atheism, Ps. 14, 1. "An atheism is here depicted which goes beyond even that of Ps. 10. There the existence of God was not so much denied as His providence. Here His existence is not only denied, but denied in the very depths of the man's heart. He has contrived to convince himself of what he so much wishes." (*Rawlinson.*) Theoretical atheism is impossible, because the existence of God is a fact that has been wrought into the heart of man, and its consciousness is continually reinforced by the created universe. There is no escape from the conviction: There is a God! However, practical atheism is not only possible, but common, *viz.*, treating God as if He did not exist, putting Him out of the mind. Occasionally, even Christians become practical atheists. But the party referred to in our text has adopted the denial of God, and of any claim that God may have on his worship as the standing rule of his life and conduct. Such a person is counted with the idolaters, because he has made himself the only god whom he proposes to obey, and is thus become a brother of the devil, who started out on his atheistic career with the same purpose.

3. The folly of idolatry in its gross form has been specially noted in connection with the idol-worship of pagans, Ps. 115, 4,¹⁴ and atheism, Ps. 14, 1.¹⁵

14) The context shows that in vv. 4—8 the holy writer meets the scorn of the heathen with counter-scorn. They scoff at the God of Israel, in stupid blindness to the fact that their manufacture of gods exposes them to the ridicule of all sane men. It may be from a wish to escape this scorn that the tale was invented by some heathen that their idols had dropped down from heaven, Acts 19, 35. The manufacture of idols is depicted with crushing irony in Is. 40, 9—20. — The language of Ps. 115, 4—8 is also received into Ps. 135, 15—18, showing that Israel was taught to taunt idol-worshippers frequently, even in their sacred songs.

15) נָבַל, expressing utter perversity and folly, is rightly held to "refer to character rather than 'folly. Atheism is accompanied by deep moral corruption." "The fool's creed,' as it has been called, is not the conclusion of his reason, but the practical language of a lawless, selfish life." (*Rawlinson. Condor.*) They are corrupt, and have done abominable works, that is why they cannot afford to acknowledge a God of retributive justice and of holiness.

4. External, or gross, idolatry is but the visible eruption of an inward taint. There is an internal, or fine, idolatry, that is the root of this evil. It is called fine, because it is not so readily detected as the other, and because it can assume a virtuous garb, like self-reliance, filial devotion, etc. *Luther*: "What is it to have a god? or, what is God? Answer: A god is that whereto we are to look for all good and to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a god is to trust and believe him from the whole heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust be right, then is your god also true. And, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for those belong together, *viz.*, faith and God. That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god." (*Large Cat.*, p. 391.) Fine idolatry is "to fear, love, and trust in creatures as we should fear, love, and trust in God alone."

a. Manifestations of fine idolatry are:—

a. Any fear which supersedes in us the fear of God. *Matt.* 10, 28 solves the embarrassment for a religious person who is confronted with a conflict of authorities: on the one hand he beholds a power that can inflict temporal and physical harm if he does not yield to it (persecution by tyrannical governments, the Roman inquisition, banishment to Siberia, commercial boycott, social ostracism, loss of prestige and influence in a learned profession, etc.); on the other hand is God, who can inflict eternal misery on soul and body, if a person disregards His will. A human and temporal fear which suppresses the reverence due God is idolatrous.

b. Any love which supersedes in us the love of God. *Matt.* 10, 37 places the natural and spontaneous affections springing up between parents and children—the parallel text, in *Luke* 11, 26. 27, names also the love between husband and wife and between brothers and sisters—in opposition to the religious affection which a believer entertains for God. This is not an imaginary possibility; even the language of every-day life knows of such a practise as "idolizing" a child, a wife, etc.

c. Any confidence which supersedes in us the trust we place in God. *Prov.* 3, 5 is a statement, the two parts of which are grammatically balanced and logically exclude one another. *חַבַּטָּה*, literally, "to cling to," thence, "to confide in," "to set one's hope and confidence upon" = *עָשָׂה*, literally, "to lean upon, rest upon," just as a man rests upon a spear for support, or as kings were accustomed to appear in public leaning on their friends and ministers. (*Deane.*)

The object of the former verb is God, and for Him a whole-hearted confidence is required. The object of the latter is the intellectual power in man, by which we "form plans with discretion, and employ legitimate means in the pursuit of our ends." If trust in our own ingenuity overbalances our trust in God, we have removed God from that place in our heart which belongs to Him alone. Even when we employ our reason and experience in our daily tasks, "we are to depend upon God and His directing and overruling providence." (*Wardlaw.*) Zoekler has rightly called trust in God, with its corresponding renunciation of reliance on self, a "fundamental principle of all religion." Without this it is impossible to carry out any of the precepts of religion.—The same sin is committed, only in another form, if one makes other men the basis of his trust, to the exclusion of placing his confidence in the Lord, Jer. 17, 5.¹⁶) For their advancement in business or in their profession, or to secure themselves against the misfortunes of life, men will seek the influence and active support of great men or societies of men, like the lodges, and consider themselves fortified against danger by this device. The sense of dependence on the unseen, but ever-present, all-wise, and merciful Arbiter of our destinies is thus weakened and ultimately stamped out; the heart has "departed from the Lord."—In still another form the idolatrous misplacement of confidence is committed by "the covetous man," Eph. 5, 5.¹⁷) "Money conquers all things," says the world. We in America are accustomed to the phrase "the almighty dollar," so that a wit has suggested a change in the inscription of one of our coins to this effect: "In *this* God we trust." This sin is very old. (See Job 31, 24.)—*Luther*: "Many a one thinks that he has God and everything in abundance when he has money and possessions, in which he trusts, and of which he boasts, so arrogantly as to care for no one. Lo, such a man also has a god, Mammon by name, *i. e.*, money and possessions, on which he sets all his heart, and which is also the most common idol on earth. He who has money and possessions feels secure, and is as joyful and un-

16) Even a scholar of the negative school like Cheyne, in his comment on this text, notes that "God and man, flesh and spirit, are natural antitheses. (Comp. Is. 31, 3; Ps. 56, 4.) The prayer of the believer is: 'Be Thou [O Jehovah] their arm every morning'; not Egypt, not Assyria, not any 'arm of flesh.'"

17) *πλεονέκτης* is a derivative of *πλέον* + *ἔχειν*, signifying a person who wants to "have more," hence, is not satisfied with what God provides, or not content if God separates his riches from him (Matt. 19, 16: the rich young man) or him from his riches (Luke 16, 19: the rich man).

dismayed as though he were in the midst of Paradise. On the other hand, he who has none doubts and is despondent, as though he knew of no God. For very few are to be found who are of good cheer, and who neither mourn nor complain if they have not Mammon. This care and desire for money adheres and clings to our nature, even to the grave.— So, too, whoever trusts in, and boasts of, great skill, prudence, power, favor, friendship, and honor has also a god, but not the only true God. This appears again when you notice how presumptuous, secure, and proud people are because of such possessions, and how despondent when without them and deprived of them. Therefore I repeat that the true explanation of this point is that to have a god is to have something upon which the heart entirely trusts.” (l. c., p. 391 f.)

d. Carnalism (*ἡ κοιλία*), secularism, materialism (*τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες*), is named as a form of idolatry in Phil. 3, 19 (*ὣν ὁ θεός*). It is fine idolatry; no representations of the Deity worshiped are set up to the eye, but most eager service is rendered to the god of these people: they serve their animal appetites¹⁸) by eating and drinking, as if these were the whole end of their existence. What tickles their flesh, and gives them an enjoyment of which a child of God is ashamed, is their “glory,” that is, they glorify those things, as if in them alone true wisdom, true happiness, were found. They have no interests beyond this life. Their motto and slogan is recorded 1 Cor. 15, 32.— And thus also fine idolatry reaches its climax in atheism, — practical atheism. The flesh-worshiper may not go to the trouble of trying to prove that there is no God, but his whole mode of living, his trend of thought, his aspirations, hopes, and fears, require the absence of God.

b. The effects of fine idolatry are: the curse of God (Jer. 17, 5), exclusion from a share and portion in Christ’s redeeming work (Matt. 10, 37: “not worthy of Me”; Eph. 5, 6: “no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God”), finally, eternal perdition, Matt. 10, 28. Hell will be peopled with idolaters.

III. The Commandment Proper. Qu. 16.

A. In General:—

When God wants no one and nothing to be preferred to Him, He claims the chief place in our affection. Our thoughts, desires, resolves, are to be full of God. He is to be the center around

18) The heathen knew this idolatry, but did not call it such: the *γαστριμαγλία* of Plato (*Phaed.*, p. 81) and of Lucian (*Amor.* 42) is this practise.

which our whole life revolves, and everything else is to be valued by us only because it connects us with Him. *Luther*: "We are to trust in God alone, and look to Him, and expect from Him all good, as from One who gives us body, life, food, drink, nourishment, health, protection, peace, and all necessaries of both temporal and eternal things; who also preserves us from misfortune, and, if any evil befall us, delivers and aids us, so that it is God alone from whom we receive all good, and by whom we are delivered from all evil. Hence also, I think, we Germans, from ancient times, designate God more elegantly and appropriately than in any other language by that name from the word *Good*, since He is an eternal Fountain, which gushes forth and overflows with pure good, and from which emanates all that is, and is called, good. For even though otherwise we experience much good from men, we are still to consider whatever we receive by His command or arrangement as received from God. For our parents, and all rulers, and every one besides, with respect to his neighbor, have received from God the command that they should do us all manner of good, so that we receive these blessings not from them, but, through them, from God. For creatures are only the hand, channels, and means whereby God gives all things, as He gives to the mother breasts and milk to support her child, and corn and all manner of produce spring from the earth for nourishment, none of which could be produced by any creature of himself. Therefore no man should presume to take or give anything except as God has commanded, in order that thereby it may be acknowledged as God's gift, and thanks may be rendered Him for it. On this account also these means of receiving good gifts through creatures are not to be rejected, neither should we in presumption seek other ways and means than God has commanded. For that would not be receiving from God, but seeking of ourselves." (l. c., p. 393 f.) — In the holy Christian Church which John saw in a vision these truths are acknowledged by all the saints. (Rev. 4, 11.) The First Commandment not only dictates the proper worship of God, but makes our whole lives one continued worship of the Ever Adorable One.

B. In Particular:—

The chief forms in which obedience to this commandment is expressed are:—

1. *Fear*. This signifies—

a. That men should regard God as an object of awe, to be approached with reverence, and addressed with deference and hu-

military.¹⁹⁾ Why God wants to be thus feared He told Abraham Gen. 17, 1 a:²⁰⁾ He is the Being of transcendent power and grace.

b. That men should regulate their walk and conduct by reverent consideration of His, constant presence, Gen. 17, 1 b,²¹⁾ and strive to make every action of theirs measure up to the standard which He has set them in His Law, Gen. 17, 16,²²⁾ and shun all wickedness, Gen. 39, 9.

c. That men should brave the most terrible dangers in God's cause, Dan. 3. 6.

19) יִרְאוּ and יִגִּדוּ, in Ps. 33, 8, do not signify two kinds of fear, one, the slavish fear of sinners, to whom God is an object of terror (for such fear God does not desire of any one; He has not implanted it in any one's heart, and by such fear no one fulfils His commandment); the other, the godly fear of those who regard Him as their Father. But the two verbs, according to the law of Hebrew poetry, reinforce each other. For according to their root-meaning both would indicate a slavish fear: the former is derived from a root that means "to tremble," the latter from a root that means "to turn out of the way, since he who is timid and in fear of any one yields the way to him, gets out of his way." (*Gesenius*.) The action of both verbs in our text is commanded, and hence, when rendered, yields God pleasure. It is the reverent awe with which men face Him.

20) אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרֵי is "descriptive of God as revealing Himself violently in His might, hence correctly rendered *παντοκράτωρ* by the LXX in Job (*Oehler*); distinguishing Jehovah, the God of salvation, from Elohim, who creates nature so that it is, and supports it that it may stand, as 'the God who compels nature to do what is contrary to itself, and subdues it to bow and minister to grace' (*Delitzsch*); characterizing Jehovah, the covenant God, 'as possessing the power to realize His promises, even when the order of nature presented no prospect of their fulfilment, and the powers of nature were insufficient to secure it' (*Keil*); perhaps, like Elohim and Adonai, one of the world-wide titles of the Most High, since it was known to Balaam, and is constantly used in Job." (*Whitelaw*.) This collection of views shows that Luther's rendering is safe and sufficient.

21) לִפְנֵי = "in My presence, as if conscious of My inspection, and solicitous of My approval; not behind Me, as if sensible of shortcomings, and desirous to elude observation." (*Whitelaw*.)

22) הַמִּים = *ἀμειπτος*, unimpeachable, or = *τέλειος*, perfect (both renderings of the LXX in Gen. 6, 9), "indicates that absolute standard of moral attainment, viz., completeness of being in respect of purity, which the supreme Lawgiver sets before His intelligent creatures. Cf. Matt. 5, 8." (*Whitelaw*.)

2. *Love.* This signifies —

a. That men should esteem God their highest good, Ps. 73, 25. Neither heaven with its gorgeous archangels nor earth with its beauties and most precious treasures “can supply a substitute for God. On Him the heart’s affections are centered. Comp. Ps. 63, 1.” (*Rawlinson.*)

b. That men should cling to Him with all their heart, Ps. 73, 26, gladly sacrificing that which they hold most dear, their life, for Him.

c. That even a painful duty shall become a joyful task, true love’s labor to them, because He has asked it, Gen. 22.

3. *Trust.* This signifies —

a. To “trust” God, Ps. 118, 8,²³) and to “hope in Him,” Ps. 42, 11, in days of anguish, disquietude, sorrow.

b. To consider Him “my God,” Ps. 42, 11, one who holds a very close relation to me, and *vice versa*, and from whom nothing but what is truly good must be expected.

c. To expect efficient help and restoration after suffering from Him, Ps. 42, 11,²⁴) without questioning either His ability or His willingness to render such aid. Ps. 73, 26: “God is the Strength of my heart and my Portion forever,” gives the proper and adequate expression to such trust.

Luther: “Let every one, then, see to it that he esteem this commandment great and high above all things, and do not deride it. Ask and examine your heart diligently, and you will find whether it cleave to God or not. If you have a heart that can expect of Him nothing but what is good, and this, too, in want and distress, and that renounces and forsakes everything that is not God, then you have the only true God. If, on the contrary, it cleave to anything else, of which it expects more good and help than of God, and do not find refuge in Him, but in adversity flee from Him, then you have an idol, another god.” (l. c., p. 394.)

D.

23) קָסַח , literally, means to flee to a place, to take shelter; hence, to make God our stronghold in perilous times, rather than to put confidence in (בָּטַח , cling to) frail men, even though they were lords on earth.

24) יְשׁוּעַת פָּנַי , literally, “deliverance, or safety, of my face,” that is, “my very own Deliverer.” The term “health” in our English version of this text is not due to a mistake of a transcriber who wrote it down for “help,” but is meant to express a deliverance from disease which restores health to the countenance.
