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LUTHER'S BREAK WITH ROME.

Leipzig, 1519. The storm which had been brooding over Europe, the clouds thickest over the Vatican at Rome, had presaged its coming by mutterings growing ever louder, and finally intermittent flashes of lightning and sudden vehement gusts of wind and rain followed, the harbingers of the breaking storm. Luther's Ninety-five Theses had flashed across the astonished heavens; then, in quick succession, two bolts of lightning which disturbed the Vatican—Cajetan and Miltitz's failure to return to Rome with the evidence of Luther's recantation in their possession. But still the Pope did not realize the magnitude of the danger which threatened the hierarchy. Tetzel had failed, Cajetan had failed, Miltitz had failed, but the man was left who was sure to crush this upstart of a monk and make an end of him—Dr. Eck. Rome looked for an abrupt ending of the disturbances which had been raised by the Wittenberg monk; in 1519 the storm broke in all its fury. 1519 is the great year in the life of Luther, it is the turning-point of his eventful career. Up to Leipzig Luther still had a vestige of faith left in the Pope; after Leipzig we see how the bond between Luther and the Church of Rome had been severed beyond any power to knit it together again. At Leipzig Luther did what no man before him had dared to do—he denied the right of the Pope to call himself the Vicar of Christ, the infallible head of the Church. He dared to express the opinion that church-councils were liable to err, as well as their head, the Pope. He dared to say, "The Scriptures stand above the church-fathers." He

LUTHER'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE CLASSICS.

What is here offered does not pretend to be an original contribution to the subject with which it deals. What has already been well done need not be done again. The other day a pamphlet fell into my hands, which I found highly interesting and instructive, and which, in my opinion, deserves to be more widely known than I assume it to be. I am referring to a little work by O. G. Schmidt, *Luthers Bekanntschaft mit den alten Klassikern*. The book gives evidence of careful and accurate study, and it is in the hope that the readers of the QUARTERLY may derive some benefit and inspiration from Schmidt's investigations that the results are herewith presented. Apart from some glosses and parenthetical remarks of my own, this article is therefore a summary of the above-mentioned work. —

In the year 1524 Luther wrote the following: "Until quite recently no one knew why God brought the languages to light. Now we know that it happened for the sake of the Gospel, which God had purposed to reveal, and thus unmask and destroy the reign of Antichrist. He gave Greece to the Turks that the Greeks might be dispersed and disseminate the knowledge of their language."¹⁾ Already before Luther's birth, as early as

1) As a matter of fact, the beginning of Greek study in the West was not coincident with the fall of Constantinople (1453), but antedates that event. As early as 1396 Manuel Chrysoloras taught Greek in the univer-

1460 in fact, the humanistic culture—in Italy it had almost become a cult—had crossed the Alps and found a home in the University of Erfurt, where it was represented by such men as Maternus Pistoris, who lectured on the Latin classics in 1494, Nicholas Marschalk, his colleague, who established the first printing-press in Germany for Greek books, Hermann Busch, called by Strauss “the missionary of Humanism,” Conrad Muth, for a time the pride of the university, Crotus Rubeanus, and others. These men speedily gathered around them a band of enthusiastic disciples, some of whom later aided the cause of the Reformation, while others shrinkingly turned aside. They formed a select circle, devotees of the Muses, and delighted in writing Latin verse. With the exception of Hermann Busch, these “Poets,” as they were called, did not openly attack the traditional scholastic course of study at Erfurt, though it is said that in private Mutianus (Muth) took secret delight in propounding to his admiring pupils a kind of universal theology in which Jupiter and Jesus, Mars and Hercules, appear side by side as variant designations of the one supreme deity. Such liberalism has a distinctly Italian flavor; but in Germany it was not, as in the south, proclaimed from the housetops.

Luther entered the University of Erfurt in the year 1501, that is to say, in the palmiest days of Humanism. But with all his love for the classics, Luther was never a Humanist in the full sense of that term. He never joined the circle of “Poets” at the university, and in his student days seems to have been unacquainted with its leading members. In a letter addressed to Mutianus, in the year 1516, occurs the remark: *Recentior est amicitia nostri mutua* (our friendship is of comparatively recent date). He was unacquainted with the authors of the *Epistulae Obscurorum Virorum*, and despite his fine sense of humor he disliked the tone and spirit of this famous satire, which raised a shout of laughter in all Europe. And his attitude

sity of Florence, and also published a Greek grammar. However, the fall of the Greek capital gave a powerful impetus to the humanistic movement already under way.

toward this particular performance of the Humanists is typical and characteristic. He could never identify himself with the humanistic movement as such. To the latter the study of the classics was an end in itself; to Luther it was only a means to an end. Luther's interest lay not in promoting literary culture and refinement, but in furthering the cause of the Gospel and personal religion; not in esthetic intellectual delights, but in the sterner concerns of the soul.

Luther always spoke very modestly about his humanistic training and attainments. Hear his plaint of the year 1524: "How I regret now that I did not read more poetry and history, that no one taught them to me. Instead, I was made to read the devil's dirt, the philosophers and sophists [he means the scholastics], with much pain, labor, and loss, so that I have trouble enough to get rid of it." To the same effect somewhat later: "Were I as eloquent and rich in words as Erasmus, in Greek as learned as Camerarius, and in Hebrew as skilled as Foestemius, and were I still younger, ah, how would I delve into the Word of God!" Ten years before his death he expresses the following comparative judgment: *Res et verba Philippus, verba sine re Erasmus, res sine verbis Lutherus,*²⁾ *nec res, nec verba Carolostadtius*" (Matter and words, Philip, *i. e.*, Melancthon; words without matter, Erasmus; matter without words, Luther; neither matter nor words, Carlstadt). Similar statements, really unfair to himself, might be added. In his correspondence with the leaders of Humanism, Luther usually speaks in a tone of deferential modesty regarding his classical equipment and his literary style. So in the case of Reuchlin, Erasmus, and Mutianus. In the letter to the latter, referred to above, Luther compares himself with the peasant Corydon in Vergil's *Eclogues*, and calls himself a barbarian, who had always been accustomed to cackle among the geese.

But we must not be misled. In fact, we must defend Luther against himself. A man of Luther's intellectual caliber has

2) Schaff remarks: "But Luther was the master of words and matter, and his words were deeds." (*History of the Christian Church*, VI, p. 422.)

his own canons of self-judgment, somewhat more rigorous and exacting than those of the average man. True, the attempt has latterly been made to take Luther's self-criticism at its face value, to fasten, indeed, among many other faults and defects also the stigma of crass ignorance upon the Reformer's fair fame. Denifle, one of the latest in a long line of detractors, has the sorry distinction of trying to convince the world that Luther was nothing but an uncouth barbarian, who, to use Hallam's phrase, "bellowed in bad Latin." Luther, to be sure, did not write or speak Ciceronian Latin. What is more, he never made any serious attempt to do so. The English philosopher Hobbes once said that words were some men's counters, other men's money. Luther certainly did not belong to the latter class. He cared little for mere form and finish and pedantic refinements of style. He cared more for matter than manner, for substance than form (compare his Bible translation, which exhibits, at times, startling boldness in handling the original), although Luther's language often casts itself into molds of exquisite beauty. The pet hobby of the typical Humanist to reproduce the elegance of classic Latinity (a futile attempt, of course) was to a man of Luther's serious turn of mind the veriest trifling. And he takes no pains to disguise his sentiments in the matter. His Latin letters often teem with barbarisms, deliberate barbarisms, which would have shocked the refined sensibilities of the "Poets." Schmidt gives an interesting collection, in part, a Germanico-Latin anthology, of phrases and expressions, in which Luther toyed with language as a child with its playthings. For the delectation of the reader I insert a few of the most characteristic, *viz.*, *Satanissima bulla, asini asinissimi, caput EIGENSINNissimum, in prandio lactior SCHREIBAVIT, verbis VERDRIESSLICISSIMIS*, etc. Needless to say that such things as these simply show that Luther was never a slave of words, but always their master. He took liberties with language which would make a timid and shrinking schoolmaster stare and gasp. When occasion required, Luther admittedly spoke and wrote a clear and vigorous Latin style.

Even Cajetan, surely an unbiased critic, who had a tilt with the Reformer at Augsburg in 1518, confessed that Luther knew his grammar very well. Says Schmidt: "If we compare with Luther's self-criticism his own Latin style, the characteristic clearness, vigor, and freshness of the latter has long since been recognized. How could it have been otherwise than that the pronounced individuality of Luther's mind should have found adequate expression also through the vehicle of Latin? The letters of Erasmus with their polished sentences and select phraseology soon become wearisome; to the letters of Luther and to *De Servo Arbitrio* we return with ever new delight as to a draught from a refreshing spring. Luther uses and commands the Latin idiom with perfect ease and independence, and always finds the right word for the right thought." "A glorious monument of his estimation of the classics is Luther's address to the 'Ratsherren aller Staedte Deutschlands,' etc., in which he advocates the study of languages with red-hot zeal and sets forth his reasons for doing so with overmastering eloquence and power. Who can measure the beneficent influence which these golden words exerted in shaping the course of education in Germany, and directing it into worthy and fruitful channels?"

But let us now try to ascertain somewhat more in detail the extent of Luther's knowledge of the ancient classics. Let us begin with the Roman prose writers. Luther's most favorite Latin author was Cicero. No ancient writer is more frequently referred to in Luther's writings than Cicero, and none is treated with greater distinction. Luther admired his philosophical disquisitions, his ethical writings, and his masterpieces of eloquence. The profoundest subjects of human inquiry, says Luther, were ably handled by Cicero, such as, whether there be a God, what God is, and whether He concerns Himself with things mundane (with reference to the Epicureans, who denied this). In fact, Luther places Cicero above Aristotle as a philosopher. "Whoever desires to learn true philosophy, let him read Cicero," is Luther's verdict. He also preferred the Ciceronian ethics to the moral teachings of the Greek. In only one point, it seems,

did Luther acknowledge the preeminence of Aristotle—in critical acumen and dialectic subtlety. Again, Luther was profoundly impressed by the bewitching eloquence of the great orator. “When I read Cicero’s orations,” he says, “I feel ineloquent and stammer like a child.”³⁾ He notes the deftness of the Roman in disguising the weak points of an argument, while bringing all its favorable aspects into bold relief. He expresses his astonishment that a man so constantly occupied with the affairs of state should have read and written so much. Nor did he disdain to quote Cicero in elucidating some Biblical text. Eccl. 1, 4: “All is vanity and vexation of spirit” (rather with the Revised Version: “All . . . and a *striving after wind*”) suggests to Luther the Ciceronian *Optime cogitata pessime evenire* (The best of plans take a most unhappy issue). Ps. 127, 1. 2: “Except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Except Jehovah keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain,” etc., recalls, by way of contrast, the optimistic and self-glorifying line of Cicero in praise of his consulship: *O fortunatam natam me consule Romam.*⁴⁾ Perhaps the most frequently cited utterance of Cicero is *Summum ius summa iniuria*, occurring in *De Officiis* I, 10, 33, and there referred to as a trite proverb (*tritum proverbium*). The meaning is that undue rigor in the literal enforcement of law and justice may often lead to the greatest injustice. In his letters, Luther often recurs to the Ciceronian proverb *Sus Minervam docet* (The swine teaches Minerva, *i. e.*, the ignorant instructs the wise), applying it at times to himself under all manner of whimsical variations.

3) It is interesting here to compare with Luther’s own estimate of himself the statement of the Catholic historian Doellinger, who, contrasting the language of his enemies with the Reformer’s “transporting eloquence,” says, “They stammered, he spoke.”

4) This line, revealing at once Cicero’s vanity as a statesman and his mediocrity as a poet, was already ridiculed by the ancients, especially by the great satirist Juvenal. The artificial jingling is aptly reproduced in Mr. Gifford’s translation:

How fortunate a natal day was thine
In that late consulate, O Rome, of mine!

While fully recognizing the genius and varied accomplishments of Cicero, Luther is not blind to his defects and shortcomings. He cannot go to such lengths as Erasmus, who, after reading *De Senectute*, confessed: *Vix me contineo, quin exclamem: Sancte Cicero, ora pro nobis* (I can hardly refrain from crying out, Holy Cicero, pray for us). Truly Erasmian indeed, implying, perhaps, a sarcastic fling at the abounding saint-worship of the day. Standing outside the sphere of revelation, says Luther, Cicero's ignorance in divine things must needs be insuperable. The arguments which Cicero employs to disarm the King of Terrors and find comfort for his soul, Luther finds inadequate. Nevertheless, Luther indulges the hope that God will be merciful to the worthy man, and dispense him from the word, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." At all events, Luther thinks he will stand a few degrees higher on the day of reckoning than the cardinals and the Archbishop of Mainz.

Luther seems to have been well acquainted with Livy, the great Roman historian. This is seen not so much by the number of quotations, which would naturally be less than in the case of a philosophical and ethical writer like Cicero, as from general statements regarding Livy's merits as a historian, his manner, style, and the like. In the first place, Luther regrets that so much of Livy's work has perished. He appreciates Livy's powers of vivid narration, and calls attention to his propensity to embellish his materials with a highly decorative coloring. In this respect he contrasts the profuseness of the Livian manner with the lapidary succinctness of the Mosaic narratives. Speaking of the story of Cain and Abel, he exclaims, *Quantas hic tragoedias faceret Cicero et Livius!* (What tragedies would Cicero and Livy create here!) At the same time he accuses Livy of undue bias and partiality in favor of the Romans. His general acquaintance with this writer is further shown by the remark that he used to read the account of Abraham and Melchizedek like a story from Livy.

Among other Roman historians who came within the ken

of the Reformer are Sallust, Suetonius, and Tacitus. Eccl. 5, 10: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver," is paralleled by a statement from Sallust's *Catiline*: *Avaritia tale monstrum est, quod neque copia neque inopia minuitur* (Avarice is such a monster as to be satisfied neither by plenty nor by want). Tacitus's account of the manners and customs of the ancient Germans was one of the subjects of Luther's table-talk. On his way to Torgau, in company with Melancthon, Luther talked with his friend about the veracity and trustworthiness of the German forefathers, likewise referred to by Tacitus. In the course of the conversation the Reformer sadly remarked that the morals of the German people had deteriorated since the times of Tacitus. Luther could not, of course, fail to notice what the Roman historian said about the besetting sin of the Germans, their proneness to drink. He again compares the ancestors with his own generation, with the result that also in this case the morals of the nation had deteriorated — the Germans had gone from bad to worse. Suetonius is once quoted by Luther. Nero's humane wish that the whole world might go up in flames, as recorded by Suetonius, is referred to by Luther in his polemical treatise *Wider Hans Worst*.⁵⁾

A widely read Roman author in Luther's day was Pliny the Elder. The Humanist Rhagius Aesticampianus (Rack aus Sommerfeld in homespun German) presented himself at Wittenberg in 1516 as *Primus Pliniae eruditionis publicus et ordinarius professor* (the first public and ordinary professor of the teachings of Pliny). Luther was acquainted with this humanist scholar, as well as with the famous naturalist whose writings he expounded. In his polemic *Adversus Armatum Virum Cocleum* (Against the Armed Hero Cocleus), of the year 1523, the Reformer quotes the saying attributed to Pliny the

5) A single quotation from an author does not, of course, prove Luther's full acquaintance with such author; but just as little does it prove the contrary. The reasons for less frequent quotation or reference may be purely accidental. In such cases, judgment as to the extent of Luther's knowledge must be suspended.

Elder: *Nullum librum esse tam malum, quin in aliqua parte sit bonus* (that no book is so bad but that it may be good in any one part). He is also acquainted with the same writer's pessimistic utterance: *Tempestivam mortem optimum remedium hominis esse* (that timely death is the best remedy available to humankind). In his table-talk he refers to Pliny's statement that the ichneumon kills the crocodile, and sees in this a type of Christ.⁶⁾ In his comments on Gen. 3, 17: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake," etc., he adduces, by way of contrast, the words of Pliny that the earth is *benignam, mitem ac indulgentem matrem, item perpetuam ancillam usus hominis* (that the earth is a kind, gentle, and indulgent mother, likewise a hand-maid constantly active for the benefit of man). On Gen. 8, 20 he remarks that Pliny calls the earth a *stepmother* of man, and finds fault with him for writing so much about venomous reptiles, serpents, and crocodiles. In the main, Luther is not in sympathy with Pliny, and numbers him among the materialists and Epicureans. This becomes especially apparent in his sermons on 1 Cor. 15, of the years 1544 and 1545, in which he rejects the views of Pliny, the "wise fool," in denying the possibility of a physical resurrection. Pliny's reasoning takes the following shape: If our dead body, which is burned to powder or is decayed in the earth, should rise again from the dust of the earth, where will it find hearing and vision, reason and understanding?

As for Pliny the Younger, Luther is acquainted with his well-known letter addressed to the emperor Trajan regarding the legal procedure against the Christians in the province of Bithynia. Luther makes reference to this in his sermons on the First Epistle of Peter. And here we shall beg leave to make a little digression. The memorable correspondence between Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, Asia Minor, from 109 to 111, and the humane Trajan, called the "father of his country,"

6) If the Reformer is here accurately reported, this is a strange bit of fantastic typology.

concerning the course to be pursued in dealing with the Christians, constitutes one of the most important sources of early church history. "It represents," in the words of Milman, "paganism already claiming the alliance of power to maintain its decaying influence." "It was here [in Bithynia] that the first cry of distress was uttered and complaints of deserted temples and less frequent sacrifices were brought before the tribunal of the government." I shall insert the essential parts of this correspondence, though it is not strictly germane to our present task. Says Pliny: *Cognitionibus de Christianis interfui numquam: ideo nescio quid et quatenus aut puniri soleat aut quaeri. Nec mediocriter haesitavi sitne aliquod discrimen aetatum, an quamlibet teneri nihil a robustioribus differant, detur poenitentiae venia, an ei, qui omnino Christianus fuit, desisse non prosit, nomen ipsum, si flagitiis careat, an flagitia cohaerentia nomini puniantur. Interim in eis, qui ad me tamquam Christiani deferebantur, hunc sum secutus modum: Interrogavi ipsos, an essent Christiani. Confitentes iterum atque tertio interrogavi, supplicium minatus; perseverantes duci iussi. . . . Qui negabant esse se Christianos aut fuisse, cum . . . deos appellarent et imagini tuae . . . ture ac vino supplicarent, praeterea male dicerent Christo . . . dimittendos putavi.* (I have never been present at the trials of the Christians; therefore I am ignorant both of what should be inquired into and punished, and how severe the punishment should be. I am especially uncertain whether any difference should be made on account of age, or whether the young should be treated in exactly the same way as the older; whether pardon should be granted to the penitent, or whether retraction of one's faith should not be taken into account; whether the mere profession, apart from crimes, or the crimes attaching to the profession, should be punished. Meanwhile I have adopted the following course with regard to those who were denounced as Christians: I asked them whether they were Christians. If they confessed, I asked them for the second and third time, threatening the death-penalty. If they persisted, I ordered them led to execution. . . . Those who

denied that they were, or ever had been, Christians, when they called upon the gods and offered incense and wine to thy image, also blasphemed Christ, I thought proper to dismiss.) The Emperor's answer, brief and dignified, runs as follows: *Actum, quem debuisti, mi Secunde, in excutiendis causis eorum, qui Christiani ad te delati fuerant, secutus es. Neque enim in universum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest. Conquirendi non sunt; si deferantur et arguantur, puniendi sunt, ita tamen, ut qui negaverit se Christianum esse, idque re ipsa manifestum fecerit, id est supplicando diis nostris, quamvis suspectus in praeteritum, veniam ex paenitentia impetret. Sine auctore vero propositi libelli in nullo crimine locum habere debent. Nam et pessimi exempli nec nostri saeculi est.* (You have followed the proper course, my dear Secundus, in conducting the trials of those who were denounced to you as Christians. No general or definite rule can be laid down. They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and convicted, they are to be punished, yet with this provision, that he who denies being a Christian, and proves his denial by his acts, *i. e.*, by offering prayer to our gods, should, whatever the former suspicion against him, receive pardon because of his recantation. Anonymous accusations must in no case be considered. Such procedure establishes a very bad precedent, and is not in keeping with the spirit of our age.)

Luther entertained a very high opinion of Quintilian, the famous Latin stylist and rhetorician, who, as the Reformer says, combines most happily matter and manner (*verbo et re docet quam felicissime*). For this reason Quintilian should occupy a prominent place in the instruction of the youth. In his controversy with Erasmus, Luther frequently quotes the writings of Quintilian, notably the saying, *Nemo est, qui non malit nosse, quam discere videri* (There is no one who would not rather appear to know than to learn).

Besides the authors thus far mentioned, Luther shows acquaintance with "the distinguished Roman" Varro, with the geographer Pomponius Mela, who is referred to in Luther's

comments on Ps. 73, with the compiler Aulus Gellius, with the Stoic philosopher Seneca, who is repeatedly quoted, and with his namesake, the poet Seneca. All taken together, quite a formidable array, and I have not mentioned every name.

And now for the Roman poets. Luther himself was a poet, a poet of rare genius and power. Even his enemies admit this. The Jesuits said: *Hymni Lutheri animas plures quam scripta et declamationes occiderunt* (Luther's hymns have destroyed more souls than his writings and declarations). When Eoban Hesse, the foremost humanistic poet of Germany, sent him a metrical version of the Psalms, Luther gratefully acknowledged the gift in a letter, in which he said that he belonged to those to whom poetry made a more powerful appeal than the most brilliant performances of eloquence. It is not surprising, therefore, that Luther was attracted by the Roman poets. Vergil was his favorite, as he had been the favorite of the entire mediæval period. One need only recall the exalted position Vergil holds in Dante's great poem. Luther's familiarity with the great Mantuan bard is abundantly testified. He expresses unqualified admiration for his genius. He says Vergil surpasses all the rest in majesty and grandeur, (*heroicâ gravitate*).⁷⁾ He quotes him freely in his controversial writings against the papacy (particularly in *Das Papsttum zu Rom vom Teufel gestiftet*), and against Erasmus in *De Servo Arbitrio*; he draws on him for illustrative parallels in Biblical exegesis, while a goodly number of familiar and less familiar lines are at his fingers' ends. Our space forbids giving details. Interesting,

7) One is reminded here of Dryden's estimate (unduly biased in favor of Milton):

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn:
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed;
The next in *majesty*; in both the last.
The force of nature could no further go:
To make a third she joined the other two.

The "three poets" are Homer, Vergil, and Milton.

too, is the way in which Luther applies Vergilian names to contemporary characters, when the characters and circumstances seem to offer an analogy. In speaking to his wife about Jerome Baungaertner, the noble patrician of Nuernberg, who was once temporarily captivated by Katie's charms (such as she had), Luther jestingly calls him "thy flame *Amyntas* (*Ecl.* III, 66), thine old love." Duke Henry of Brunswick appears as *Mezentius* (*Aen.* VIII, 482). The most notable example of this kind is the introduction of Cajetan playing the perfidious role of Sinon. After the disputation of Augsburg in 1518, where the emissary of the papal court got more than he bargained for, Luther wrote to his friend Spalatin: *Hunc Sinonem parum consulte instructum arte Pelasga* (*Aen.* II, 79. 106. 152) *dimisi* (I have gotten rid of this Sinon, insufficiently equipped with Pelasgan guile). Even the Reformer himself appears, as indicated above, as the unlettered peasant *Corydon* of the second *Eclogue* of Vergil.

Next comes Ovid. "Ovid," says Luther, "is an excellent poet, surpassing all others in fine proverbial sayings, masterfully expressed in terse and charming verse. Thus: *Nox et amor vinumque nihil moderabile suadent* [night and love and wine counsel no moderation, *i. e.*, lead to excesses] is beautifully lucid and simple." Luther has a large number of these easily tripping epigrams, embodying rules of worldly and ethical wisdom, at his command. It is tantalizing to pass them by, but my article is growing. Like Vergil, Ovid also furnished the Reformer with typical characters, which he transfers to men of his own day. Every schoolboy remembers the unhappy fate of those daring and inexperienced aviators, Phaeton and Icarus. To Luther their rash attempt to sail the aerial blue is comparable to the Utopian schemes and dreams of the "Rottengeister." "They are all youthful enthusiasts," says Luther, *Icari, Phaetontes*, "who flutter about in the air." Emser, Luther's great enemy, is a reincarnation of Daedalus: *O felix Daedalus* (O happy Daedalus)! Quite unexpectedly Ovid's familiar lines concerning the physical preeminence of man over against

the animal creation are cited in one of Luther's Christmas sermons. They are as follows:

*Pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram
Os homini sublime dedit, caelumque tueri
Jussit.*

(While other creatures look prone to the earth, he [the *opifex rerum*, the Creator] gave to man an uplifted countenance, and bade him look toward the heavens.) Oddly enough, Luther criticizes this sentiment, attributing to the poet more, we think, than his words were intended to mean. "Here," says Luther, "man is represented as a rational, wise, intelligent being, whereas according to the Scriptures he has turned his back to God, is godless and evil, subject to the devil." But the poet is not speaking of man's mental, much less of his moral and religious characteristics.

Horace apparently stood lower in Luther's regard than Ovid. Indeed, if Luther's judgment be correct, the Venusian bard must yield the place of honor to Prudentius, a later Christian poet, who, had he lived in the days of Augustus, would have stood higher, Luther thinks, in the estimation of Vergil than Horace. Nevertheless, Luther seems to have known and appreciated his Horace pretty well. He quotes Horace very frequently, and from all parts of his works. *Hic murus aeneus esto, nil conscire sibi et nulla pallescere culpa* (Let this be thy brazen wall, to be conscious of no ill, and to turn pale with no guilt), from the first book of Horace's *Epistles*, appears in a letter from Coburg to Erhard Schnepf, in the year 1530. *Si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae*, *Carm. III, 3, 7 sq.* (Though a crushed world should fall upon him [the man who is conscious of his integrity], the ruins would strike him undismayed), reminding, as to form, of Ps. 46, 3, which formed the basis of Luther's great battle-hymn, appears repeatedly in Luther's letters to Jonas. Luther's fund of proverbs was enriched by numerous passages from Horace, which, again, we cannot stop to insert. Luther must have been particularly attracted by *De Arte Poetica*. Schmidt has collected no less

than twelve direct references to this masterly treatise. Luther is acquainted with the *laudator temporis acti*, l. 173 (the eulogizer of times gone by); and who has not heard this same panegyrist? He is acquainted with the poet who carefully weighs *quid ferre recusent, quid valeant humeri*, l. 39 sq. (what his shoulders refuse, and what they are able to bear, *i. e.*, who carefully estimates the measure of his ability); with the singer *qui rapit in medias res*, l. 148 (who hurries us into the midst of things); with the wise counsel: *Tu nihil invita dices faciesve Minerva*, l. 385 (You will say or accomplish nothing, if Minerva be unwilling, *i. e.*, if natural talent be wanting); with the mocking sarcasm: *Amphora coepit institui; cur currente rota urceus exit?* l. 21 (The beginning promises a vase; why, as the wheel turns round, does a pitcher come out?); with the fate of the monotonous tautologist: *Ridetur chorda, qui semper oberrat eadem*, l. 356 (He who harps blunderingly on the same string is laughed at); with the grandiloquent euphonist who hides his poverty of thought beneath a mass of verbiage: *Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus* (The mountains are in labor, a ridiculous mouse will be born). Nor is the "herd of Epicure" wanting. In *De Servo Arbitrio* we meet with *Epicuri de grege porcus*, Ep. I, 4, 16 (a hog from the herd of Epicure). — One more reference must suffice. In his notes on Eccl. 3, 10 f., a passage describing the gilded misery of the covetous, Luther adduces no less than three different utterances of Horace by way of illustration, *viz.*: *Magnas inter opes inops*, *Carm.* III, 16. 28 (in want amid great plenty);

Congestis undique sacris

Indormis inhians, at tamquam parcere sacris

Cogeris, aut pictis tamquam gaudere tabellis.

(*Sat.* I, 70 sqq.)

(Thou [*i. e.*, the miser] hast hoarded up thy sacred treasures from every quarter, sleepest upon them with anxious desire, and yet thou must abstain from them as from consecrated things, or enjoy them only as painted tablets, *i. e.*, by merely gloating over them); *semper avarus eget*, *Ep.* I, 2, 56 (The covetous is ever in want).

We pass on to Terence (Terentius Afer), the Roman comedian. Luther was thoroughly acquainted with his comedies. Quotations and reminiscences from this author are scattered up and down in the Reformer's writings, often indeed with strong deviations from the original (Luther often quoted from memory). A few examples must suffice. The most familiar utterance of Terence undoubtedly is: *Homo sum; humani nil a me alienum puto*, *Heaut.* I, 1, 25 (I am a man; nothing human I deem foreign to me). This, of course, was known and used by Luther. *Dicunt ius summum saepe summa est malitia*, *Heaut.* IV, 5. 48 (They say extreme justice is often the greatest injustice). To the megalomaniac, who thinks that the world fails to appreciate his surpassing merits, Luther loves to apply the words of the slave in *Phormio*: *O regem me esse oportuit* (Oh, I should have been a king)! In Schenk, a preacher in Freiburg, Luther recognizes a new Simo, whose chief characteristics are summed up in *mala mens, malus animus, Andia*, I, 1, 137 (a bad mind, a bad heart).

Luther made abundant use of Terence in his exegetical work. In his remarks on Gen. 3, 7 ("The eyes of both were opened," etc.), he finds occasion to refer to *Adelphi* I, 2, 22: *Non est flagitium, mihi crede, adolescentulum scortari* (It is no offense, believe me, carnally to abuse a youth). The deception of Jacob and Rebekah (Gen. 27, 11 sqq.) and the consequent position of Isaac recalls *Heaut.* V, 1, 43: *Ubi possem persentiscere, nisi si essem lapis* ([many proofs] whereby I might have noticed, were I not a stone, *i. e.*, impenetrably dull). The lying subterfuge of Laban, Gen. 29, 26, suggests to Luther *Adelphi* V, 3, 19: *Nunc demum istaec nota oratiost* (That speech is just now gotten up to suit the occasion). Without inserting any further examples of this kind, I shall only add that Luther not only favored the study of Terence in the schools, but also heartily endorsed the practise of Melancthon in arranging dramatic representations by the students. This the Reformer considered an innocent pleasure, to say nothing of its educational and cultural value.

Luther's knowledge of Roman poets was not confined to the familiar circle of the so-called Golden Age. He quotes Lucretius, perhaps the greatest apostle of materialism that the world has seen, and pronounced by Elizabeth B. Browning to be the "chief poet by the Tiberside." Tibullus, Propertius, Catullus, Martial, Juvenal, and others are all represented by characteristic quotations. Some of these writers, such as Martial and Juvenal, Luther would banish from the classroom on account of their offensive matter. Late in life he procured a copy of Lucan, and did not know, on reading him, whether to call him a poet or a historian. Finally, Luther was not wholly a stranger to the poetic productions that emanated from the ranks of the Humanists. Luther's remark about Cicero's extensive reading, referred to above, applies, *mutatis mutandis*, in a higher degree to himself. We can only express our astonishment that a man who was so constantly occupied with the most weighty affairs in Church and State in one of the most momentous epochs in the world's history should have read and assimilated so much.

Before leaving this subject, we cannot withhold from the reader a few specimens of Luther's own efforts in Latin versification. Many of these are of a satirico-polémical character, and are directed principally against the papacy. For example, Luther is confident that, living and dead, he will be "the pest" of the Pope. This sentiment is expressed in the following hexameter:

Pestis eram vivus, moriens ero mors tua, Papa.

(Living I was thy pest, dying I shall be thy death, O Pope.)
Recovering from a dangerous illness in 1537, he thus apostrophizes His Holiness:

*Quacsitus toties, toties tibi, Roma, petitus,
En ego per Christum vivo Lutherus adhuc.
Una mihi spes est, qua non fraudabor, Jesus;
Hanc mihi dum teneam, perfida Roma, cave!*

(So often, O Rome, waylaid, so often assailed by thee,
Behold! I, Luther, still live through the great mercy of Christ.
My only hope is in Jesus, faithful and sure and unfailling;
Long 'as I shall cling to Him, perfidious Rome, beware!)

To Erasmus Luther administers the following rebuke:

*Qui Satanqm non odit, amet tua carmina, Erasme,
Atque idem iungat Furias et mulgeat Orcum.*

(Who hates not Satan and his wife
May with thy verse his time beguile,
Erasmus, and likewise may he
Tame Orcus and the Furies three.)

Luther's polemic against Cochlaeus⁸⁾ of the year 1523 is introduced with the following exquisite parody on the opening lines of the Aeneid:

*Arma virumque cano, Mogani, qui nuper ab oris
Leucoream fato stolidus Saxonaque venit
Littora, multum ille et furiis vexatus et oestro
Vi scelerum, memorem Rasorum cladis ob iram,
Multa quoque et Satana passus, quo perderet urbem
Inferretque malum studiis, genus unde malorum
Errorumque Patres atque alti gloria Papae.*

(Arms and the hero I sing who lately from Main's watered meadows,

Frenzied by fate, to Leucorea⁹⁾ came and the coasts of Saxonian regions.

Much that hero was vexed by furies grim and relentless,
Thanks to his crimes and the vengeful wrath of the shaven monastics.

Much did he suffer besides from Satan's wily suggestions
To ruin both city and arts; whence a long brood of pestilent evils,
Fathers of errors arose and the Pope's high honor and glory.)

The epitaph written at the death of his daughter Magdalene reveals the inner sanctuary of Luther's soul. It is as follows:

*Dormio cum sanctis hic Magdalena Lutheri
Filia, et hoc strato tecta [al. tuta] quiesco meo.
Filia mortis eram, peccati semine nata,
Sanguine sed vivo, Christe, redempta tuo.*

We add his own German translation:

Hier schlaf' ich, Lenichen, Doktor Luthers Tochterlein,
Ruh' mit allen Heil'gen in mein'm Bettelein.
Die ich in Suenden war gebor'n,
Haett' ewig muessen sein verlorn;
Aber ich leb' nun und hab's gut,
Herr Christe, erloest mit deinem Blut.

8) Luther called him "Kochloeffel," and even "Rotzloeffel," according to the rude manner of the age.

9) White mountain = Wittenberg.

Luther's metrical reproduction of Ps. 128, his satirical lines on the "Weltanschauung" of Epicure, and the charming ode on a bubbling fountain near Wittenberg, all too long for insertion here, are gems of real poetry. —

Coming now to Luther's knowledge of the Greek language and literature, we find that he was much less at home among the literary treasures of ancient Hellas than among those of Rome. When Luther began seriously to study Greek, the storm and stress of the Reformation was upon him, making systematic application well-nigh impossible. In 1518 Luther inquires of Lang, concerning the difference between *anathēma* and *anathēma*.¹⁰ When Camerarius, in 1530, twice wrote Luther in Greek, the Reformer answered jestingly that if he should persist in writing letters in Greek, he would retaliate by writing in Turkish, so that he, too, might be obliged to read what he was unable to understand. However, we must not take these things too seriously. At times, Luther tells us plainly that he is not a mere tyro in Greek. "I know neither Hebrew nor Greek," he says; "yet I am prepared to face a Hebraist and a Grecian." He taunts his bitter opponent Cochlaeus with ignorance of Greek. *Quid mirum, si sonum Graecae linguae non intelligas, qui nihil Graece didiceris!* (What wonder if you do not understand the sound of the Greek tongue, since you have learned no Greek!) In fact, Luther showed a keen appreciation of the riches and beauty of the Greek language. In view of the numerous analogies and points of resemblance between Greek and German, he even expressed the wish that Greek might be introduced in Germany as the language of scholarship in preference to Latin.

As might be expected, Luther's fine poetic sense was charmed by the music of Homer's verse. When Melanchthon, shortly after his arrival at Wittenberg, opened his lectures on the *Iliad*, Luther was one of the many students that thronged the classroom of the youthful scholar. It was probably at this

10) Compare Thayer, *Lexicon*; Cremer, *Bibl.-theol. Woerterbuch*, and Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Test.*, p. 187.

time (1518) that Luther purchased a copy of Homer, in order to become a Greek, as he said. His letters of this period bear evidence of his Greek studies. They contain numerous quotations and reminiscences from the Homeric poems. Thus Spalatin, Luther's influential advocate with the Elector, is addressed as follows: *Sed unus tu mihi littus et, ut homerice dicam, thin' halos atrygetoio, Iliad I, 316* (Thou art my only defense [*lit.*, shore], and, to speak Homericly, the shore of the restless [?] brine). In a letter to Carlstadt, shortly before the Disputation at Leipzig, Luther calls Eck, the redoubtable champion of Romanism, *kallipasēios kai leukolenos persona* (a fair-cheeked and white-armed person) — epithets applied by Homer to Nausicaa, the daughter of Alcinous. All the Homeric characters are familiar to Luther — Hector, Achilles, Ajax, Ulysses, Agamemnon, Nestor, and the rest. As just remarked, Luther entertained a very high opinion of Homer. He calls him *princeps poetarum* (the prince of poets), the father of poets, yes, an ocean of erudition, wisdom, and eloquence. Of course, he is not specially edified by the crude anthropomorphism of Homer's aggregation of deities. Cicero, he says, had already drawn attention to the fact that Homer transferred human passions and weaknesses to the gods, in other words, that he made the gods in the image of man.

The post-Homeric poets are only sporadically quoted by Luther, a fact which makes it doubtful whether he drew from the original sources, or simply appropriated the citations of others. In connection with Gen. 20, 4 sq. he refers to Hesiod's lines:

*Hois d'hybris te momete kake kai schellia erga,
Tois de diken Kronides tekmairetai curyopa Zeus.*

(To those who commit vile wantonness and abominable deeds, the son of Kronos, far-seeing Jove, appoints condign punishment.) From the same poet he adduces the line:

Oikon men protista, gynaika te boum t'arotera

(A house above all things, a wife, and a steer for plowing), once in his notes on Gen. 29, 16 sqq., and again on Ps. 128, 2. Finally, in illustrating the thought that every stage of life has

its allotted task, which Luther develops in connection with Ps. 127, 4, the Reformer again cites Hesiod: *Erganeon, boulai de' meson, eukai de geronton* (Work is appropriate to youth, counsel to those in middle life, rest to the aged). Pindar and Simonides are each represented by one reference.

Apart from a few stray allusions and citations, the entire field of Greek tragedy and comedy is passed over in silence. Aristophanes, for example, is not once mentioned. The same applies to the domain of historiography. Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius seem to have been utter strangers to Luther. Xenophon is occasionally mentioned, though not as a historian, but as a philosopher and a moralist side by side with Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, and others. Plutarch is twice noticed. Among the seven wise men of Greece, Luther knows Bias and his dictum: *Magistratus ostendit virum*¹¹⁾ (Power reveals the man). The familiar *Gnothi seauton* (Know thyself), commonly attributed to Thales, occurs in Luther's comments on Eccl. 7, 17.

Luther took a very critical attitude toward the great philosophers Plato and Aristotle. Plato, he says, shares the immoderate pride of his race by thanking God that he was born a man, and not a beast; a Greek, and not a barbarian; a man, and not a woman. Plato's pantheistic conception of God is abhorrent to Luther, because "he descants upon God as if God were nothing and yet all. Eck and the sophists followed him without understanding him. They would comprehend the Deity by their speculation, which leads to nothing." Nor does Luther at all agree with Plato's view of the human soul, which, he says, the philosopher resolves into a pure abstraction. Again, Luther dissents from Plato's philosophizing about the creation of man and the latter's superiority over the beasts. He is even inclined to think that Plato is hardly in earnest in discussing these lofty themes, his intention being rather, in Luther's opinion, to expose the other philosophers to ridicule. As to Plato's theory of the state, Luther thinks it is utterly impracticable and, apart from some excellent ideas, a pure fantasy. The statement that the

11) Schmidt gives the Latin. The original is: *Arche deiknysi andra.*

administration of human governments is impossible without injustice is particularly offensive to him. He is more satisfied with the Platonic idea that just as oxen are not ruled by oxen, nor rams by rams, so men can be governed only by great heroes and men of superior wisdom.

Luther was thoroughly acquainted with Aristotle, who dominated the philosophical and theological thinking at the universities, and, in fact, had done so for several centuries. When he began his academic activity at Wittenberg in 1508, he lectured on the dialectics and physics of the Stagirite. But the more he penetrated into the Scriptures, the more he felt the insufficiency of the great master as a guide. Already in 1509 he shows in a letter to Braun of Eisenach that his confidence in the great intellectual king is shaken. In 1517 he writes to Lang: "Aristotle sinks deeper and deeper, soon to fall forever to the ground." In his *Address to the German Nobility* (1520) he complains bitterly that "the blind pagan master Aristotle" should control all learning at the universities. "I am grieved in my heart that the damned, proud, roguish heathen should have misled and fooled so many of the best Christians." Luther's denunciation is extremely severe, almost unqualified. He claims to have read the writings of Aristotle thoroughly, and that more intelligently than either Thomas Aquinas or Duns Scotus. But instead of being carried away by the authority of a great name, he is determined that this canonized pagan, this *praecursor Christi in naturalibus* (precursor of Christ in natural things), shall be hurled from his dominant position. He condemns the physics, metaphysics, and ethics of Aristotle, rejects his view of the materiality and mortality of the soul, of the eternal duration of the world, of the nature of the Deity that rules the world "as a sleepy maid rocks the child in the cradle." The only works of Aristotle which Luther was willing to retain are those on logic, rhetoric, and poetry. These, he thinks, might serve a good purpose as text-books in the schools. Later in life, Luther's judgment was much less severe. Three days before his death he declared the fifth book of the Nicomachian ethics

to be Aristotle's best work. For a time he had preferred *De anima* (On the Soul).

We must tarry a moment with Lucian, the great scoffer and satirist. "Lucian," says Luther, "I praise highly. He speaks in plain, unvarnished fashion, and mocks at everything openly. Erasmus, on the contrary, falsifies all things, even godliness itself, under the guise of godliness. Therefore he is more dangerous and pernicious than Lucian." And such sentiments Luther expresses not only to others, but to Erasmus himself in *De Servo Arbitrio*.

Finally, Aesop, the famous writer of fables, deserves more than a passing notice. Aesop stood exceptionally high in Luther's estimation. The moral element pervading his writings appealed strongly to his practical turn of mind. Next to the Bible he considers the *scripta Catonis* (the writings of Cato) and Aesop's *Fables* the best books. Therefore he not only recommended the works of Aesop as a school-book, but even began the preparation of a popular edition for wider circulation. While at Coburg in 1530, when events were happening at Augsburg, he wrote to Melanchthon that he contemplated building on his Zion three tabernacles, one for the Psalter, one for the Prophets, and one for Aesop. The Aesopian collections current at the time contained much worthless and objectionable matter. These elements Luther carefully eliminated; he wrote an instructive introduction to the whole, and began the work of translation. But the task was never completed. Only thirteen fables passed under his hands. It may be remarked in passing that the Reformer, like Quintilian, questioned the very existence of Aesop, preferring the view that the fables represent the wisdom of many sages, put together piece by piece, and finally fathered on a single writer. "Such fine fables," he argues, "as this book contains, all the world could not invent now, much less a single author." —

We have now taken a rapid survey of Luther's attainments in the field of the ancient classics. Schmidt has examined the Reformer, and it will be admitted that he stood the test very

well. The "crass ignoramus" (Denifle) turns out in the light of the foregoing to be "a very respectable scholar" (Boehmer).

A few concluding observations. Luther was a wizard in the use of words. His native literary talent could not be replaced by study of any kind. But is it probable that his natural genius would have developed such commanding power without the stimulation and inspiration of classical models? True, he never became a servile imitator. His Latin as well as his German style bears the stamp of originality and independence. At the same time, he himself cheerfully acknowledged his debt to the classics. "If we should ever," he says,—"which God forbid,—neglect the study of the languages, we shall not only lose the Gospel, but finally be unable to write either Latin or German correctly."

It need scarcely be said that Luther would have been very imperfectly equipped for the battle of the Reformation with the cumbersome armor of scholasticism. The smooth stones from the brook of the ancient tongues were much more serviceable. To say nothing of his translation of the Bible, Luther could never have held his ground against the defenders of the traditional order without the knowledge of the classics. Among his opponents were such men as Eck, Emser, Erasmus, the foremost Humanists and ecclesiastics of the day. What would have become of Luther at Leipzig in his encounter with Eck, had he not been familiar with Latin and Greek? Mosellanus, who presided over the disputation, calls special attention to Luther's knowledge of Greek as revealed on this occasion. At Worms Luther's ability to repeat his address in Latin before that august assembly produced a most favorable impression. Luther's knowledge of the classics was certainly a great deal more than a mere academic accomplishment with no practical value. But we cannot expand the subject at greater length. Let those who decry the so-called "dead languages," and who would all but banish them from the educational curriculum, remember that Luther, the inaugurator of the modern era, was their warm advocate and champion.

CARL GAENSSLE.