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“JERUSALEM, ROME, AND WASHINGTON.”

An Italian gentleman of pleasing address, his clean-shaven face beaming happiness and his piercing eyes kindling with the enthusiasm of hope and bright prospects, stood “before a highly distinguished audience” on the 30th of January, 1893. From the windows of the room in which he had come to speak the suave gentleman could have looked out, had he cared to do so, upon many an object dear to the hearts of citizens of the North American Republic. He might have been said to be standing in the shadow of the dome of the Capitol of the United States, and almost within harking distance of the Presidential Mansion. All around him could be observed the material evidences of the activities of a great government. The gentleman was fully conscious of his surroundings. He was pleased to know that he was exactly where he was. He loved and admired the beautiful American city on the Potomac. But his love was hardly that of the patriot, and his admiration differed from that of the tourist. He loved and admired the city, and the country which had made the city the seat of its government, not so much for what they were at the time of his address, but for what they would be, and what he ardently hoped to be instrumental in making them, within a measurable space of time.

The gentleman was a person of authority, but he was not independent. At the moment of which we are speaking he was representing a higher authority far away, and his remarks were inspired by that higher authority. In fact, he had been careful

WARTBURG LETTERS OF LUTHER.

(Continued.)

TO MELANCHTHON.¹⁾

Jesus.

1. Grace! The two quaternions of our friend Carlstadt on celibacy were brought to me an hour ago, and I have read them.²⁾ I could wish that the text which speaks of seed offered

1) The original of this letter is found in Rhediger's Collection in the city library at Breslau. It was published in incomplete form by Aurifaber I, 346, republished, after the text of Aurifaber, by De Wette II, 37. The St. Louis Edition (XV, 2590 ff.) presents the letter complete and amended on the strength of the variant readings offered in Kolde, *Analecta*, p. 33 ff., and the supplements of the Erlangen Correspondence III, 210.

2) Carlstadt's treatise on Celibacy, Monastic Life, and Widowhood (*De caelibatu, monachatu et viduitate liber*). Carlstadt's object in issuing

to Moloch [Lev. 18, 21; 20, 2]³⁾ had not been wrested to denote seminal emission. Our opponents will ridicule this perversion of the text; for it is clearer than daylight that the text speaks of sons and daughters which were immolated at the worship of the idol. Still, I am greatly pleased with his effort and the labor he has bestowed on it. [He argues his case by comparing the effeminate to Onan, the son of Judah. However, this person did not spoil his seed in a passion, but with a wicked intent; and it is not firmly established yet whether effeminacy is to be accounted a greater or lesser crime than fornication or adultery.]

2. At the same time, I am displeased with his reference to the passage in Paul's Epistle to Timothy, which is quite obscure and seems to contain a command not so much regarding the state of matrimony as rather concerning the support of widows from the alms of the church. He says [1 Tim. 5, 16]: "Let not the church be charged," and states that it would indeed occasion reproachful remarks if these widows were to marry after they had waxed wanton from the support which the alms of the church had furnished them. But he certainly did not wish to have the conclusion drawn from his statement that he meant to have young persons excluded from the state of celibacy. For he is speaking only of widows, and excludes them from the alms of the church when they are young and wanton.

3. Again, what I remarked in my former letter to you⁴⁾ moves me to adopt the opposite view, *viz.*, Paul seems to issue a warning against future offenses, but does not pronounce past arrangements invalid; so that this passage concerning the state of virginity and celibacy proves nothing at all. For it is one thing to receive a widow, whose husband has died and who is

this treatise was to explain the theses which he had published "postridie Gervasii," the day after the festival of St. Gervais, which is June 20th, not June 19th, as Jaeger has it in his "Carlstadt," p. 176, and the Erlangen Correspondence.

3) All bracketed matter in this letter has been transferred from the margin of the original to the body of the letter.

4) See THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY, vol. XII, p. 114, § 6.

forsaken by all, as a ward to be supported from the general alms of the church; and it is quite another thing to adopt the state of virginity and celibacy. My reason for these remarks is, because I would not have anything published by you that is based on obscure and doubtful texts of Scripture. What is demanded of us is light, that shall be clearer than the sun and all stars. Even then people scarcely see.

4. Now, who will prove incontrovertibly that the statement [1 Tim. 5, 14 in the Vulgate]: "I will therefore that the younger women marry," refers to widows, and is not rather a general exhortation addressed to all younger females, except those widows whom he had rejected before, while he had, at the same time, admitted also younger women as sisters, etc. [1 Tim. 5, 2.] For he has not said: "I will that the younger widows marry;" for he had rejected those who wanted to marry.

5. I am in great straits because of the remark [in v. 12], that the younger widows shall be rejected, because they have cast off their first faith. I am in doubts as to the correct interpretation of these words. If they are rejected for casting off their first faith, it certainly follows that the younger widows had vowed to maintain this faith (*fidem ligasse* = they had obligated themselves sincerely to keep this faith), no matter how young they were. On the other hand, I consider it a point of importance that the widows in question were such as had been chosen, not upon their personal vow, but by a general vote of the church. For he says [v. 9]: "Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old." There is room given here for the exercise of the authority to reject, but those who had once been elected were not at liberty to withdraw afterwards.

6. The very severe testimonies concerning the rendering of vows, which have been cited from the ancient Law, do not impress me in the least; for it is impossible to understand these injunctions as applying or applicable to the vow of chastity. Everybody knows that they were issued to a nation which was prohibited, by the severest penalty of the divine curse and of

public infamy, from living chaste, still more, from vowing chastity.⁵⁾

7. I have fully settled, to my own satisfaction, this point, *viz.*, that it cannot be established from Scripture, either by a positive law or by an example, that chastity comes under the head of vows. All that I am willing to grant (“Es bleibt nur uebrig”) is, that according to 1 Cor. 7 it is left optional with a person. Beyond that, I hold, it cannot be enjoined by laws and ordinances of men, unless it is done upon the inspiration of Satan. Of this I am certain; let the consequences be whatever they will. Accordingly, it is a dangerous undertaking to vow chastity; however, who can claim that on that account the vow of chastity is invalid, inasmuch as a person might from his own choice live chaste, and might cite the advice and example of Scripture in his behalf.

8. But while reflecting on many things, I observe that Peter in the liberty of the Spirit has also cast off the unbearable burden of the Law from himself and others, despite the fact that he was subject to it, and has urged only this one point, that it was impossible to remain under the Law; and the entire Church coincided with him, Acts 15, 10. Afterwards he even ate with Gentiles. On the other hand, there is this fact to be noted in opposition that he did not act upon his own authority, but had received a command from heaven [Acts 10, 15], not to regard anything as unclean, that is, he was told that it was not necessary for Gentiles to observe the Law. However, it was not by divine revelation that he drew this consequence, that observance of the Law was not necessary *for himself*. [Italics ours. — *Ed.*] nor for the Jews, inasmuch as following the example of the Gentiles he assumed this freedom for himself, although he had been burdened with the Law.

9. Again, I reflect on the cure which Christ effected on a Sabbath day on a daughter of Abraham who had been bound [by Satan] eighteen years [Luke 13, 11. 16]. Might not these

5) “Chaste” and “chastity” here in the sense of a single, unmarried life.

persons, too, have been deluded by Satan, and might not a great many at least of those taking the vow have done so from self-elected worship or by instigation of Satan, when the spirit [suggesting the vow—*Ed.*] had not yet been proved?

10. I am entirely of the opinion that there is, in some way, quite an easy solution of all these difficulties impending; however, we do not perceive it at present. For if Christ were present, I have no doubt but what He would dissolve these bonds and annul all vows, and would suffer no one to be loaded with the enforced yoke of vows, because He is the Savior and Bishop of souls. Accordingly, it almost seems to me that in this case we must make use of the liberty of the Spirit, and must forge through every obstacle that is placed in the way to the salvation of souls.

11. For so far He has not indicated, either by revelation, or by sign, or by testimony, that He is pleased with these vows which men have assumed of their own accord. And it might be altogether a dangerous undertaking to follow a practice of which it has not been shown that He approves of it in any way, all the more because we see that so many souls perish against their own will and from sheer necessity, who might very easily have been succored, if it had not been for this vow, which is of uncertain merit. Is not this running as uncertainly? Is not this beating the air? Aye, for this reason we are again taking up the discussion of this matter.⁶⁾ I should like very much, if we were to discuss these matters orally in conference at some future time. It may be that Christ will give us more of His Spirit and more knowledge, and, therewith, more liberty.

6) "Former editions, at this place, put an interrogation point after 'Quin ergo revocamus cursum.' The ancient translator has rendered these words thus: 'Are we not, in this way, retracing our steps?' It is very doubtful to us, after what Kolde has said, *Analecta*, p. 34, where the word *cursum* belongs into the text. He says: 'After *revocamus*' (mark, he does not say, after *cursum*) 'the original has the following insertion: *Ht vellem*, etc., and then follows the remainder of the present paragraph.'" (Hoppe.)

However, I pray that meanwhile you may be enlightened with a greater portion of the Spirit.

12. I have another strong reason for my opinion, to-wit, a vow of this kind has never received the approval of men when it was taken by a person under fourteen years of age, so that a vow binding a person for life is indeed invalid. But who will assure us that a vow is binding for life when taken after the fourteenth year? God is silent regarding this matter; men know nothing about it. Alas, we miserable men are led into such uncertain matters and espouse them as certain; hence, also for this reason it appears to be presumptuous and displeasing to God, who is a God of counsel and knowledge, not a God of recklessness, ignorance, and uncertainty. You observe with what strong emotions I am stirred; still I am not able as yet to lay down a rule in such a way as to make it serviceable to you; I only desire greatly to come to your aid in your efforts.

13. Furthermore, in some instances I have annulled vows that were taken before a person was twenty years of age, and I would still annul them, because everybody sees that such vows were taken without counsel and knowledge. However, I have acted thus only in regard to vows of persons who had not yet changed their station in society ("ihren Stand") and their garments. But as regards those who had entered the monastery and had already become priests reading mass, I have hitherto not attempted to do anything. I do not know what it is in this ecclesiastical pomp that beclouds my mind and what human notion harasses me in this matter.

14. May our Lord Jesus instruct and deliver and by His mercy guide us unto our liberty! We are surely the people who are not to be burdened with any law, least of all with laws binding for life; but all things are to be left free to us. There is reason to fear that whatever other arrangements are made in this matter, do not proceed from a good spirit. Let this suffice.

⁷⁾ Spalatin writes me for the second time, requesting me

7) The remainder of this letter is missing in the older editions; Kolde has appended it in the Erlangen Correspondence.

to furnish him a more extensive explanation,⁸⁾ in my sermon on Confession, of the words of John [ch. 20, 23]: "Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." If it is so that these words have not been explained by me, I am surprised, because I had it strongly impressed upon my mind that this text, before others, would have to be treated on account of our adversaries. It may be, however, that he is troubled with the same reflection that troubles you all, *viz.*, that my explanation is not clear.⁹⁾ However, it will be difficult for me, now that I have not the treatise at hand and do not know what precedes and what follows, to send you, at haphazard, a paragraph that you might insert; but if it should be needed I shall try to send you a paragraph, which you may insert in a suitable place, after you have changed such sections as require a change. He also complains to me about the slow progress which your printer makes. Accordingly, I herewith reprove you, yea, I scold you, whether in season or out of season. What more can I do? See? I understand that you have six presses; according to my calculation I am keeping four of them engaged, the compend¹⁰⁾ three, and Carlstadt two. But I am surprised that my *Magnificat*¹¹⁾ has not yet been brought out. As to the Postils, I desire that they be printed with good and correct type.

I would have you to be unconcerned about my health; else I shall confess nothing to you in future, if I find out that you are troubled about me. Who knows but what I have come to the end of my labors ("Dienst")? Have not I singly ("ich einiger Mensch") caused disturbance enough? I have not lived in vain. Would to God that I had lived to His pleasing! I observe that your spirit is increasing, and my spirit seems to me to be decreasing. And I am full of praise because of this ob-

8) Luther complied with this request. See St. Louis Ed., vol. XV, 2523, § 7.

9) Luther says: "dass dies dunkel sei." The translator could not bring himself to believe that "dies" refers to the *text*.

10) "Methodus," *i. e.*, Melancthon's *Loci*.

11) See St. Louis Ed., vol. VII, 1372; XV, 2526 § 1, and 2525, § 15.

servation. Would to God that I might become nothing, and you everything! Only do pray for me, lest my trust in the Lord vanish. I ask you, in your answer to give me your advice whether I ought to reply to the oaks and Bel-idols of the Sorbonne.¹²⁾ For it is of some concern to me whether I should make a personal attack upon these men, and whether I should begin a thorough defense of the truth I have proclaimed.¹³⁾ I see that I must call upon your spirit for good counsel.

Spalatin has also written me in regard to the establishment of a Christian University, but I have answered him that it surpasses my ability to offer advice, because I am all alone.¹⁴⁾ Endeavor to give him satisfaction; if you choose you may let him read this letter.¹⁵⁾ Farewell!

On the Day [of the Discovery]¹⁶⁾ of the First Martyr,
Stephen [August 3], 1521.

Your

MARTIN LUTHER.

(To be continued.)

12) The condemnatory verdict of the Paris Faculty (see St. Louis Ed., vol. XVIII, 932 ff.) had been drawn up chiefly by three men, viz., Magister Noel Beda, syndic of the theological faculty, William a Quereu, or Duchêne (*i. e.*, William of the Oak), and a certain Christophorus. From a letter of Glarean to Zwingli, dated at Paris, July 4, 1521 (see Zwingli's Works VII, 176), we learn that these three men had been nicknamed Belua, Stercus, and Christotomus (*i. e.*, Monster, Dung, and Christ-cutter).

13) "Diese Sache liegt mir an, dass mein Name auch gegen diese einen Angriff mache, ob mit der Wahrheit eine weitlaeuftigere Verteidigung gegeben werden muesse."

14) See THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY, vol: XII, p. 111.

15) Melanchthon gave this letter to Spalatin. See *Corp. Ref.* I, 488.

16) "Am Tage der Erfindung." Prof. Hoppe remarks: "There are three Days of St. Stephen: the Day of St. Stephen proper, December 26, which Kolde has erroneously assumed as the date of this letter; *Stephani translatio*, the elevation of Stephen, May 7, and *Stephani inventio*, August 3. The contents of this letter leave no doubt that the date last named is the one intended."