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THE MISSOURI SYNOD AND DIETRICH'S CATECHISM.

The late Intersynodical Conference which was convened at Fort Wayne during August, 1905, had met for the stated purpose of examining the proof-texts of Scripture bearing on the doctrine of election. As frequently happens during discussions of this nature, matters not really essential to the business in hand were touched upon by the speakers. Thus the Fort Wayne Convention was advised that the Missouri Synod had adopted a new catechism for use in its churches and schools in lieu of Conrad Dietrich's Catechism, formerly the authorized catechism of the Missouri Synod; and that this action was tantamount to a repudiation of Missouri's former teaching on the subject of election, inasmuch as Dietrich's Catechism taught the doctrine which the Missouri Synod at present rejects. We quote the information as it was communicated to the public through church papers at the time.

Dietrich's Catechism was referred to in order to prove that the opponents of Missouri stand where this Synod (Missouri) stood formerly. Dietrich's edition of Luther's Smaller Catechism was for years published by the Missouri Synod and used in its churches. This catechism teaches on election: The grounds for election are threefold, to-wit: 1. the unfathomable goodness and mercy of God; 2. the unlimited atonement proclaimed in the Gospel; 3. the abiding saving faith in Christ. This catechism has for some years been replaced by another edition which, it is claimed, is in greater harmony with the present teaching of the Synod.

(Dr. Nicum in report to *The Lutheran* of August 31, 1905, regarding the Intersynodical Conference held at Fort Wayne, Ind., Aug. 8—10.)

WARTBURG LETTERS OF LUTHER.

(Continued.)

There are four letters extant from the month of June. The first is addressed

TO FRANCIS VON SICKINGEN.¹⁾

Dr. Martin Luther to august and brave Francis von Sickingen, my particular lord and patron:

Grace from God and peace in Christ, our Lord! We read, my lord, in the Book of Joshua that, when God brought the people of Israel into the promised land of Canaan and slew all people therein, namely, one hundred and thirty-one

1) This letter was forwarded together with Luther's treatise "Of Confession, whether the Pope Have Authority to Enjoin Same." It is found in Luther's Works, Wittenb. Ed. VII, 258; Jena Ed. I, 501; Altenb. Ed. I, 783; Leips. Ed. XVII, 692; Erlang. Ed. 27, 318. St. Louis Ed. XIX, 814; also in De Wette II, 13.

kings with all their towns, there was no city so humble as to sue for peace, save Gibeon only,—although Israel had received command from God to offer and to accept peace,—but all were hardened in insolence to make war upon Israel. Hence, the same book speaks of them, ch. 11, 19. 20, as follows: “There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle. For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favor,” etc.

This story, it seems to me, promises to become an example to our popes, bishops, doctors, and other spiritual tyrants, who plainly see and grasp that people are renouncing and tiring of their pretensions, and that everywhere the clear light is revealing in many ways their deceptive and enticing offenses, so that every cover is becoming too short and narrow for them. Still they are not humbled, do not sue for peace, yea, suffer it to be offered them in vain, are emboldened and undertake to quench the light by force and to maintain themselves in power, imagining that they are holding their saddles so firmly that they could not be unhorsed. And I am afraid that this is sent them by God, that, being hardened, they give no thought to humility and do not seek peace, and so they shall have to perish in the end, without mercy.

They are blaming me, although they well know how, in their pride, they have hitherto despised a poor man like me. I have often offered them peace; I have cried and run, have offered to make reply, have debated with them, and have now appeared at two diets. It has all been of no avail to me. I did not meet with justice, but with nefarious practices and violence. They have done no more than to order me to recant and have threatened me with every misfortune.

Well, when the hour shall come for them to cry in vain for peace, I hope that they will remember what they are now earning for themselves. I can do no more; I have now been

pushed from the stage. They have an opportunity now for mending what people cannot, shall not, and will not tolerate of them. If they do not make the change, Another will make it without their thanks, and He will not, like Luther, teach them by letters and words but by deeds. Praise and thanks be to God, because fear and awe of the scarecrow at Rome has at last decreased, and the chapter *Si quis suadente*²⁾ no longer works a spell on people. Men can now pronounce that sort of a blessing themselves.

However, lest I be idle in this wilderness of my Patmos I have also written my Apocalypse,³⁾ which I shall communicate to all who wish to hear it, and which I herewith transmit to your august lordship, in order thereby to show my cordial affection and gratitude for your manifold comfortings and services rendered to my unworthiness. It is a sermon on confession, which I wrote for this reason: During Lent this year I issued a gentle instruction to parishioners,⁴⁾ with a request to our spiritual lords and tyrants not to disturb the peace of conscience of simple people on account of my books. At the same time I showed that their tyrannical way of administering confession was unwarranted. But they rush on headstrong, never heeding or considering aught. Well, I have seen bubbles burst ere this, and once upon a time I beheld smoke so vile that it threatened to put out the sun. But the smoke is gone, and the sun is still shining. I shall continue to burnish and to set forth the truth, and my fear of my ungracious lords shall be as small as their contempt of me is great. Neither of us has crossed the mountain yet; however, I have this advantage, that

2) A chapter from the papal decretals outlining the mode of procedure when a person, prompted by the devil (*suadente diabolo*), had laid hands on a priest.

3) Cf. Rev. 1, 9.

4) "Dr. Martin Luther's Instruction for those going to confession, how to act in case the papal clergy refuse to absolve them unless they surrender his books which had been interdicted." This treatise was published during February, 1521, before Luther set out for Worms. See St. Louis Ed. XIX, 808 ff.

I am traveling unencumbered. God grant victory to the truth! Godspeed to you! I commend to your grace Ulrich von Hutten and Martin Bucer.

Given in my Patmos, the first day of June, 1521. —

The next letter was written a week later and addressed

To JUSTUS JONAS.⁵⁾

Jesus.

To the honorable Dr. Justus Jonas, provost of the collegiate institution at Wittenberg, his superior in the Lord, Martin Luther wishes grace in the Lord.

I, too, should have liked very much to congratulate you heartily, my dear Jonas, upon your recent accession to office;⁶⁾ however, as I could not be present in person, I have resolved to send you herewith my Latomus. But he is no longer a reviler of the knowledge of languages; for this Ishbi-benob has been laid low by the strength of our Abishai (2 Sam. 21, 16. 17); so you can be unconcerned. Nor is he even a tardy advocate trying to justify the crime of these Loewen marauders under the malicious cover of a feigned modesty and of cunning, yet luckless, expressions. For you have seen yourself, I believe, how this person vauntingly places his reliance only on his master, the pope, and his bull. But I send you a Latomus who has been expurgated by Luther's purgative and now appears to have been eased of the sprites and hobgoblins, with which he was formerly driven about himself and was wont to drive pious souls about. If they had offered this "Proof" betimes and had consulted these wise people before acting, as behooved them, they would neither have condemned nor burned

5) This letter is the epistle dedicatory to Luther's reply to Latomus and the University of Loewen. (See THEOL. QUARTERLY, Vol. X, p. 100, note 41.) Luther's reply was published at Wittenberg during August, 1521, and a second edition appeared in the year following. The letter to Jonas is found in Luther's Works, Wittenb. Ed. II, 223; Jena Latin Ed. II, 400; Erlang. Ed. Opera varii argum. V, 397. St. Louis Ed. XVIII, 1057.

6) Jonas had been made professor and provost at Wittenberg in 1521. (See Guericke, *Kirchengesch.* III, 75.)

my books, nor would they have taken counsel, like fools, after acting. So much I hope to have achieved. Latomus teaches me quite sufficiently in this treatise of his how easy it has been for them, in Luther's absence, to prate in their nooks: That is heresy! That is false! If they did not rely on might, they would not have dared to attack these matters openly.

Besides, I am persuaded that Latomus would never have published this glorious "Proof," if the bull had not fanned the fire of his confidence. Relying on it, he brags that his action has been approved, still dreaming of the antiquated and obsolete terror of bulls, and hence, he imagines that he has terrorized the whole world with his treatise, and he dares irreverently, in opposing Luther, to dilly-dally with the awful Scriptures of God. However, I should not like to see such an act go unapproved by such a bull. Nor should I wish, on the other hand, not to have been anathematized by such a bull. Everything harmonizes gloriously: the bull, the cause, the judge, and the advocate. May the Lord Jesus keep me and all pious souls from their contaminating fellowship. Amen.

However, you can hardly believe how reluctantly I have wrested myself from the peaceable writings of Christ on which I have been engaged,⁷⁾ and have wasted time reading the chicaneries of a bristling and thorny sophist. For I had before me a person who was a sophist from head to foot and was, in addition, puffed up on account of this bauble of a bull, and yet wrote with so much confidence that he regarded both painstaking and consideration of his subject as unnecessary. He was content to babble just what he chanced to have read or what came into his mouth. Now, there is not a task more

7) At the close of his "Refutation of Latomus" we find this remark (1198): "However, I revert to you, my dear Jonas, and am sending this Latomus away so as to be rid of an annoyance, because I have now begun my German Exposition of the Gospels and Epistles; that is the reason why reading and replying to his filth has proven an annoyance." In the letter to Melancthon of May 26th there was a similar reference to the work on his *Kirchenpostille*. And that, rather than his translation of the New Testament, is probably what Luther refers to also at this place.

tedious than replying to such people, because, by so doing, one can neither exercise the mind nor advance learning, and is simply forced to squander most precious hours. I surmise that this fellow believed that Luther had been removed or forever silenced, and that they might reoccupy the entire world with the tyranny of their sophistry. They blame me not a little on account of the overthrow and mitigation of their tyranny. Would to God the overthrow had been complete, and I had been able to commit a mortal sin and to contract that perfect guilt which is unpardonable to the seventh degree, if we are to believe the most holy popes who issue the bulls.

I fear, however, that while we are bravely disputing concerning grace and good works we are depriving ourselves both of grace and of works. When I behold these fearful signs of the divine wrath, I for my person have no other desire than that fountains of tears might be given to my head, Jer. 9, 1, in order that I might weep over the extreme destruction of souls which this kingdom of sin and perdition has brought about. The monster at Rome is sitting in the Church and pretends to be God; the bishops are flattering, the sophists are paying homage, and hypocrites are doing all for him. Meanwhile "hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure," Is. 5, 14, and Satan is sporting with the destruction of souls. And there is no one among us on this day of wrath to arise, earnestly and with tears, and to make up the hedge for the house of Israel, Ezek. 13, 5. Accordingly, I am filled with indignation against such blasphemous men as Latomus who are practicing sophistry in such serious matters and compel us to lay aside more profitable matters and to be occupied with their raving nonsense, and I imprecate upon their exceedingly hard heads the prayer in Ps. 6, 11: "Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly."

However, lest I detain you with too long a letter, I shall answer the main points in Latomus' preface by another introduction. Accept, for the present, this testimony of my

affection for you and pray the Lord for me that I may also be delivered — for I now make bold to speak thus with the apostle, Rom. 15, 31 — from these evil and unbelieving men at Babel, and that a door may be opened unto me for the praise of the glory of His Son's grace in the Gospel. However, I also pray the Lord to grant you His Holy Spirit to the end that you may lecture on the pestiferous decretals of Antichrist, which you are commissioned to teach, for no other purpose than I told you, viz., that you should go, attired like Aaron in sacred garments, *i. e.*, armed with the words of Holy Writ, and bearing before you the censer of prayer, to meet the destroyer in the midst of this Roman conflagration which has set the whole world on fire, but shall soon be put out by another conflagration from heaven, namely, by the coming of our Savior, for which we are waiting. This, then, is what you ought to do, my dear brother; you must teach your pupils that they must forget what you are teaching, and that they must know that men should flee from all that the pope and the papists ordain and observe, as they would from deadly poison. For since we cannot abolish this public nuisance of the world by force and are compelled to be in charge of these blasphemous offices of Babylon, the only course left open to us is, to discharge them in such a manner as to declare them to be quite foreign to, and destroyers and enemies of insatiable cruelty, hostile to our fatherland, the heavenly Jerusalem, lest we laugh and cast sheep's-eyes at our own bondage with those who are lost and to whom the Gospel of the glory of God is hid, 2 Cor. 4, 3.

Do not regard your office lightly; for after teaching the venomous filth of the pope and his excessively mad nonsense you are to teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ which brings life and salvation, thus furnishing to our youths an antidote against this poison, the very odor of which slays men, until they shall have learned to reject of their own accord what is evil, and to choose what is good. May our Emmanuel be commended to you! Be strong, then, and quit yourself like a man, and be not afraid of this Baal-Peor, for he is hardly a Beelzebub,

that is, a lord of fleas, provided only we believe. For Jesus Christ is the Lord, indeed, to whom be praise for evermore! Amen. May He perfect and strengthen you and His little Church with you. In His name farewell.

Given at my place of sojourn abroad, June 8, 1521.

(To be continued.)
