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THE ARMINIAN ARGUMENT IN ROM. 7, 14—25.

“Of whom speaketh the apostle this? of himself, or of some other man?” That is the question which has perplexed the teachers of the Church from the earliest times. The real question, however, is not whether we have in this passage a strictly personal reminiscence of the apostle, a biographical note relating exclusively to his own inner life, with no reference to the experience of others, but whether the spiritual phenomena which the apostle recounts apply to him as an unregenerate or a regenerate person, hence, whether these phenomena are significant manifestations by which any person may determine his own spiritual condition.

The Greek fathers understood the entire passage to apply to the unregenerate. So did Augustine in his early days; however, he changed his opinion in the course of the Pelagian controversy and ever since that time defended most strenuously the view that it is the ego of the regenerate that is speaking in this passage. The view of Augustine became current in the Church of the Reformation, while the majority of the papists, Socinians, and Arminians followed the view of the Greek fathers. Luther cites the seventh chapter of Romans [in the Augustinian sense] about one hundred and ten times. . . . The Lutheran Confessions, too, appeal frequently to Rom. 7, 14—25 for proof that the old Adam still clings to believers in this life, and that this passage is a description of the Christian's daily contrition and repentance which “continues until death.” (Book of Concord, Jacobs' Ed., p. 596, 7. 8; 329, 40.) With this view the unanimous opinion of all the later Lutheran theologians coincides. In the controversy with Latermann the Leipzig Faculty handed down

WARTBURG LETTERS OF LUTHER.

*(Continued.)*TO SPALATIN.¹⁾

To George Spalatin Esq., the disciple of Christ, my very dear friend in the Lord.

Jesus.

Grace! I have been prevented, meanwhile, my dear Spalatin, from going to Erfurt, because of the plague. I do not see what danger there would be if I were to stay there some time, provided an opportunity were offered me. For I should not leave Wittenberg on account of the plague. Yea, even if I were teaching at some other place, it would be just the same as if I were teaching at Wittenberg; for Christ is everywhere. However, I am not seeking a chair or a pulpit, nor shall I go anywhere with such an intention, unless I receive an urgent call. For I know that a teacher who comes of his own accord is not of God. So far I have fled from the office of teaching. Nobody need expect that I am of a different mind now. I shall always flee from that office. For had I sought it I should never have consented to go into this solitude.

Jonas writes me that he is cherishing good hopes in regard to the papal decretals.²⁾ See that the Spirit may accomplish this by enlisting your cooperation. However, it exceeds my ability to do what you wish, *viz.*, that I should alone prescribe the regulations for a Christian University.³⁾ That is a matter which requires the counsels and judgment of many. You have

1) The original of this letter is found in the General Archives of Anhalt. It has been printed in Aurifaber I, 342, De Wette II, 32, and the Erlangen Corresp. III, 203. — St. Louis Ed. XV, 2540.

2) Jonas had now removed to Wittenberg, and on June 19th had petitioned the Elector to relieve him of the duty of lecturing on canonical law. (Kawerau, Jonasbriefe, No. 54 ff.) His request was granted, and he was authorized to substitute Johann Schwertfeger.

3) Certain reforms were to be executed in the University of Wittenberg.

men in abundance at Wittenberg, who are able to serve in this matter.

It would be best to have the entire papal law utterly excluded; further, that the princes at last muster courage enough to abolish this form of jurisdiction and the church-fines in their domains altogether. We must be daring if we wish to accomplish something great and salutary. For if this sacrilegious jurisdiction is not put down and abolished, who will be able to exclude this venomous papal law? My host has made a very good beginning by prohibiting church-fines.⁴⁾ If the princes will not do this upon their own authority, let them at least connive whenever their magistrates and judges do so, and thus let the custom gradually gain prevalence throughout the world, not to torment anybody with papal laws, but to compose all strife in accordance with the laws and customs in vogue in each country.

As regards the state of my health, I evacuate more easily, owing to violent and strong drugs, but my digestion remains unchanged and the soreness continues. I am afraid that it will run into something more serious and that the Lord is chastising me according to His truth.

You will take charge of the remainder of the Postils which I enclose, have them appended to my former transmissions, and have them printed, above all, at Wittenberg. For I shall expedite matters so as to enable you to publish the entire number of the Ten Gospels in one book. I shall postpone the explanation of four Sunday-gospels, and add the remainder. I do this in order that the readers and purchasers may not be deterred by too bulky a book, and, at the same time, in order that people may have something which they can study in the meantime. Farewell in Christ and pray for me.

From the desert, the day before the Festival of Peter's Imprisonment,⁵⁾ 1521.

MARTIN LUTHER.

4) *i. e.*, by resisting the execution of the papal anathema against Luther.

5) Petri Kettenfeier, *i. e.*, July 31.

TO MELANCHTHON.⁶⁾

Jesus.

“Your claim, namely, that you cannot be expected to have knowledge of a person’s sins, or to remit same, unless they have been confessed to you, and that, unless they have been thus confessed, you are not obliged either to know or to remit them, — this claim, my dear sirs, is an unwarranted assumption.”⁷⁾

1. I still fail to see that we must treat the vows of priests and monks by the above rule. For I am much impressed with the fact that the order of the priesthood is ordained by God as a free institution, but not that of monks, which is self-elected and is being offered to God [as a service]. I could almost express the opinion that those who have entered this gorge before the age of puberty or are now in that age, can leave it without compunction. What checks me is only the question what to do with those who have spent a long time and are grown old in this order.

2. By the way, since Paul declares frankly (1 Tim. 4, 1) that the marriage of priests has been interdicted by the devils, and since the voice of Paul is the voice of divine Majesty, I have no doubt but what we must rely on him, even to the extent of declaring that monks who had consented to the devil’s interdict at the time of their reception into their order may fearlessly cancel their pact, now that they understood with whom their pact was made.

3. Now, this interdict of the devil, which is clearly indicated as such by God’s Word, urges me greatly and constrains me to approve the action of the bishop of Kemberg.⁸⁾ For

6) Aurifaber (I, 343) notes that this fragment of a letter was found in Spalatin’s library. De Wette has reproduced it. (II, 34), and it is found in the Erlangen Correspondence III, 205. The reference to Walch in De Wette and Erl. Corr. is an error; for CCIX read XCIX.

7) *ist zu hoch gefahren.* — This quotation probably refers to the first series of theses by Carlstadt of July 19, which treat the subject of sin and penitence. In § 8 Luther begins to speak of the two remaining series, which treated of the Lord’s Supper. There were, in all, twenty-four theses, eight in each series. See Jaeger, *Carlstadt*, p. 202.

8) The marriage of Bartholomew Bernhardi of Feldkirch, provost at Kemberg. See THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY X, 101.

God does not lie nor deceive when He says that the interdict is of the devil. Now, when an agreement has been entered into with the devil concerning this matter, the agreement cannot stand, because it was made against [the will of] God, in wicked error, and because it is rejected and condemned by God. For He says plainly⁹⁾ that the authors of this interdict are spirits of error.

4. Why do you hesitate, then, to accede to this divine verdict, even against the gates of hell? The oath which the children of Israel made to the Gibeonites (Josh. 9, 15) cannot be cited as a parallel. For in their laws they were enjoined to offer peace and to accept peace-offers when they were made to them; also to receive proselytes and such as were willing to adopt their customs. In that instance there was nothing done contrary to the Lord or by the prompting of spirits of error. For although they grumbled at first, yet they approved the matter afterward.

5. Add to this that celibacy is a mere human ordinance, which, being ordained by man, may be rescinded by man. Any Christian, therefore, may rescind it. I should hold this even if the ordinance were not of the devil but of some pious person. Now, since I have no such divine statement regarding monks [as the Israelites had in the instance afore-cited — Ed.], it is not safe to make a like claim in their behalf. For I should not like to follow them in their course, and hence I could not advise any one else to follow them. Would to God that we could accomplish this [rescind the interdict of the marriages of priests — Ed.], in order that no person henceforth might turn monk, or quit his order in the years of pubescence. For if there is not a plain passage of Scripture in our favor, we are obliged to avoid giving offense, regardless of the fact that the matter in question is, in itself, admissible.

6. Good Carlstadt cites Paul (1 Tim. 5, 9, 11) to the effect that the younger widows should be refused and persons of three-score years chosen; would to God that this reference would

9) 1 Tim. 4, 1, in the rendering of the Vulgate.

prove the point. For anyone can easily meet this argument by saying that the apostle, in laying down the rule aforementioned, refers to the future, while he states in regard to the past (v. 12) that (those who waxed wanton against Christ and married) have damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And thus the above citation is nullified and cannot serve as a firm rock on which the conscience can gain a footing. For that is what we are trying to find. Again, the argument that it is better to marry than to burn (1 Cor. 7, 9), or that a person should marry to avoid fornication (1 Cor. 7, 2), and do this in the sin of casting off one's faith,¹⁰ — what else is this than a mere opinion of reason? What we want is Scripture and an expression of the divine will. Who knows that the person who is burning to-day will be burning to-morrow?

7. To be sure, I should not have sanctioned the marriage of priests only on account of the burning, if Paul had not called this interdict an error, devilish, hypocritical, and damned by God, thus compelling us, even regardless of the burning, to abandon the unmarried state in the interest of the fear of God. However, it will be useful to discuss these matters more fully. For I, too, would very, very much like to come to the rescue of monks and nuns, so deeply am I grieved over these unfortunate persons, these youths and maidens who are suffering pollution and burning.

8. In regard to the twofold form of the Lord's Supper I draw my argument not from the example but from the Word of Christ. Carlstadt does not prove that those who have received the Sacrament in one form have sinned, nor that they have not sinned. What impresses me is the fact that Christ has commanded neither of the two, just as little as He has peremptorily enjoined Baptism, in an instance where a tyrannical ruler or the world should hinder the water from being applied. In the same manner the stress of persecution may separate man and wife whom God has forbidden to separate and who do not agree either to become separate. Likewise,

10) Carlstadt had stated: "True, a person does wrong by breaking a vow." Jaeger, *l. c.*, p. 195.

godfearing souls do not consent to be deprived of one form of the Lord's Supper. As to those who do consent and approve (of this robbery), who would deny that they are papists, not Christians, and that they commit sin?

9. Since Christ issues no absolute command regarding this matter, and since there is tyrannical oppression, I do not see how those who receive the Sacrament only in one form can commit sin. For who can take by force what a tyrant will not let him have? Hence, what is being urged in this matter is nothing but a sentiment of reason, which insists that the institution of Christ is not being kept; Scripture declares nothing regarding the matter, and without Scripture we may not pronounce a matter sin. It is the institution of Christ, but issued with a certain liberty,¹¹⁾ and it cannot be confined by restrictions, either wholly or in part.

10. For what would have to be done in an accident like that which happened to the martyr Donatus, *viz.*, if the chalice were broken or the wine spilled, before all had communed, and a new supply of wine were not to be had, and in many similar instances? Briefly, then, since Scripture does not compel me to claim that sin is being committed in this matter, I make no such claim.

11. However, I am greatly pleased with your efforts to restore the institution of Christ. For I had in mind this very matter as something of chief concern to me and intended to urge it after my return to you. For we now recognize the tyranny that is being exercised in this matter and are able to resist it, and not suffer ourselves to be forced to receive the Sacrament only in one form.

12. But I shall not henceforth forever read any more private masses. Let us pray God, my dear, to hasten and bestow upon us a more abundant portion of His Spirit. For I anticipate that the Lord will speedily visit Germany as it deserves to be visited on account of its unbelief, its wickedness,

11) aber frei gelassen. The context shows that Luther has in mind no other liberty than that of suffering oneself to be deprived of a divine blessing by a tyrannical authority.

and its hatred of the Gospel. But we shall have to blame ourselves for the visitation when it comes, because we were heretics and incited God to anger; and thus we shall become an object of the people's scorn and contempt. Our opponents, however, will seek to palliate their sins and to justify themselves. And thus the Lord will prove that reprobate men are not made pious either by kindness or by wrath; and many will be offended. The will of the Lord be done, yea, even so! Amen.

13. If you are a preacher of grace, do not preach a fictitious but the true grace. If grace is of the true sort, you will also have to bear true, not fictitious, sins. God does not save those who only acknowledge themselves sinners in a feigned manner. Be a sinner, then, and acknowledge great sins (*peccata fortiter*), but let your trust be still greater and rejoice in Christ, who is the Victor over sin, death, and the world.¹²⁾ We must sin as long as we are in this world; the present life is not an abode of righteousness; however, we look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, says Peter (2 Ep. 3, 13). We are satisfied, by the richness of God's glory, to have come to the knowledge of the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world. No sin shall wrest us from Him, were we even in one day to commit fornication and manslaughter a thousand times over again. Do you think the price paltry and the payment small that has been made for us by so great a Lamb?

Be strong in prayer; for you are an exceedingly great sinner.

On the Day of the Imprisonment of Peter the Apostle,¹³⁾
1521.

12) It is over heroic utterances like these that writers like Jansen and Denifle have gloated. All that is necessary to refute the charges of lasciviousness which these writers have raised against Luther on account of such utterances is to read the statement in its connection. The mere context suffices to clear Luther.

13) *Petri Kettenfeier*, *i. e.*, August 1. Veesenmeyer in his collection of Luther's Letters reads: "On the day of St. Peter and St. Paul," *i. e.*, June 29. This is inadmissible, because the present letter takes cognizance of Carlstadt's disputation, which took place July 19.