

I will try to let his words speak for themselves as much as possible and will only add comment where necessary by way of explanation. I think, reader that you will notice a striking similarity between my imaginary theologian in the previous blog and the good Dr Walther.

He starts by declaring the emancipationist (those wanting to free the slaves) to be effected by the evil of "humanism". Included in his list of "godless humanists" are such noted figures as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Payne. Walther writes...

It is an irrefutable fact that humanism has not only supplanted Christianity among a large part of the current population, it has also infected Christian theology in its very inner core, has poisoned and weakened it. We define humanism as the belief in a human ideal, a belief that man within himself has the ability to develop into a state of completeness and achieve happiness. Therefore, in order to reach this ideal state nothing else is needed than to grant each person as much room as possible to develop freely and without restraint. Freedom and equality, equal rights, equal possessions, equal enjoyment and pleasure, are thus the goal of man's striving, the attainment of which will eradicate poverty and suffering from this earth. Happiness will have found its domicile on earth, there will be heaven on earth.

This humanism is as old as the fallen world itself.

We therefore hold that abolitionism, which deems slavery a sin and therefore considers every slave holder a criminal and strives for its eradication, is the result of unbelief... Together with the emancipation of women it is the rehabilitation of the flesh...

Therefore, a Christian abolitionist, who finds himself in the company of such as these, should become aware of the wrong path he has chosen... these enemies of Christianity and religion per se, all those who are intent on doing away with the existing religious, political, and economical order of things to realize their humanistic utopia.

Can a Christian accept that now, in the 19th century, Christ's word has come to naught through progress, enlightenment, and civilization? "Can grapes be harvested from thorns, or figs from the thistle tree? A rotten tree does not bear fruit." We can only pity those Christians who have forgotten all this and with best intentions, in the desire to work for a Christian-humane purpose, have allied themselves with the enemies of Christendom, and have come under the banner of anti-Christian humanism and philanthropy, thus having lent themselves as mediums of the spirit of the times.

*Walther refers to a revolt of the serfs in Germany at the time of Luther. They had certain demands and published 12 articles. Article 3 stated...*

*It has been the custom that we were considered property, which is abominable, in view of the fact that Christ has redeemed and saved us with his precious blood, the lowly shepherd as well as the highest placed, none excluded. Therefore Scripture tells us that we are to be free."*

and here is Walthers response:

“What, there is to be no serf because Christ has redeemed us all? What is this? This means that Christian liberty is turned into liberty of the flesh. Did not Abraham and other patriarchs and prophets own serfs? Read what St. Paul has to say about servants, who at that time were all in bondage. Therefore this article is directly opposed to the Gospel and it is rapacious, for everyone who is a bondman to remove himself from his master. This article proposes to free all men, and turn the spiritual kingdom of Christ into a worldly one, which is impossible. For a worldly kingdom cannot exist where there is no class distinction, where some are free, some are prisoners, some are masters, and some are vassals, etc. As St. Paul says in Gal. 3:28, that in Christ both master and vassal are one.”

*Walther then moves on to his scriptural defense of the God given social order of slaves and masters.*

“What then do we read in Holy Scripture about slavery? Certainly it is not our intent to deal completely with every mention of slavery in Scripture. It should suffice to highlight that which expresses God’s view of the morality and immorality of these political and economical issues.

The first mention of slavery we read in Scripture is the prophetic oath Noah utters over his godless son Ham, when he tells him that as a godly punishment his descendants shall be the slaves of slaves to his brothers (Gen. 9:20-27).

In regard to Hebrew slaves, it was also the law that if the freed slave had come into bondage without wife and children, he was discharged without wife and children. In these cases, they remained the property of the master (Ex. 21:1-6; Lev. 25:39-43).

For slaves purchased from heathens there were different rules. “Should you desire to own slaves, you shall purchase them from the nations round about you, from your guests and the foreigners among you, and from their descendants which they sired in your land. Those you may have to own, and your children after you, as your property for ever and ever, and shall have them as your slaves” (Lev. 25:44-46).

In this manner God defines the relationship between master and slave as a civil, physical and timely order.

We willingly agree, however, that if the Old Testament alone spoke of such slavery, there would still be room for the idea that the morality of such a relationship has not been proven beyond all doubts.

In his letter to the Ephesians, after having addressed children and parents regarding their duties to one another: “Slaves, obey your masters with fear and trembling, single mindedly as serving Christ. Do not offer merely the outward show of service, to curry favor with men, but, as slaves of Christ, do wholeheartedly the will of God. Give the cheerful service of those who serve the Lord, not men. For you know that whatever good each man may do, slave or free, will be repaid him by the Lord” (Eph. 6:5-8).

He uses almost the same words as he counsels the slaves in his letter to the Colossians in Col. 3:22-25.

Who then can read all of this, in his heart accepting Holy Scripture as the word of God, and still consider the relationship of master and slave to be a sinful one, offensive to God’s will and order and to the spirit of the Gospel which therefore must be abolished?”

and Walther summarizes...

Truly, we cannot understand how a believing Christian can read this and still agree with the humanists of our times that slavery and serfdom are unjust. We assert that anyone who still has regard for God's word will be pierced by these words into his very heart. Anyone dreaming this modern world's dream of abolition should perceive these words as God's slaps, waking him from his dream. For here the apostle, in the Holy Spirit, explains in plain words that all he had said before, concerning the slave's conduct towards his master, should be taught by every preacher of the Gospel; and that he who teaches otherwise is in the dark and knows nothing, no matter how brilliant he considers himself. Such a man, therefore, is to be avoided by the believing Christian!

I don't know about you reader, but I'm squirming in my seat as I read this. it's just plain embarrassing.