

The Letters of Jodocus Mörlin

As Transcribed by Wilbur Hanson Kalb

From letters published by Dr. Walter Heins

All the letters are done except for one little word, “bülhin”. This little pesky word doesn’t seem to exist today, not even in the dialect of Saxony, and I don’t know the dialect of Vorarlberg. It’s not even in the online dictionary of Middle High German. As far as I have been able to decipher, it’s supposed to mean, basically, “big and strong as an oak” or, in other words, “heartiness”. Otherwise, it’s done. I could have done that section leading to the letters, but you probably would say, “To hell with that! I wanna see the letters!!!” So here they are, with the footnotes at the bottom and a little correction to the first letter’s last sentence. Your friend, Herr Reuther, is right. Jodocus’ personality as well as the family tensions really do come through his letters. I had fun with the translation; it didn’t even feel like work. No wonder you are so excited about those letters! I had a late start this morning, but I finished much sooner than I’d thought. I just hope that Jodocus didn’t embarrass his children when they were teenagers . . . “Mother was fine; she didn’t cry. Father did all the crying . . .”

Letter 1.

Undated (to Wittenberg)

The address : “where the most esteemed Master of holy Theology . . .”, and the remark, which Joachim had added underneath to prove “to my Doctorate”, places this letter in 1540. On 18 September this year Joachim Mörlin was a Doctor of Theology in Wittenberg.

Grace and Peace of the Christ! Dear Son! I would have written to you more, but as things stand now, I cannot write to you more than I could to send with this messenger, Joh. Schlesinger, the 10 Gulden to satisfy your earnest request for now. Your thesis [1](#) is worth more than 10 Hungarian florins to me. May The Almighty support your beginning! O my Joachim, my son Joachim, how much I would be with you! The messenger will show you my heart. Farewell! I can not and will not you write more now. Your brother [2](#) has put himself in trouble, but to which you seem to be quite indifferent.

Letter 2.

19 June 1543 (to Arnstadt)

Grace and Peace of Christ our Savior, I wish you and all of yours, Doctor and my dear son! First of all I will not deny to you that I have been twice to Schalkau ; the first time, when your brother received the parish, and now for the second time, when he moved there with his whole family. May the Almighty GOD bless his beginning! But how do you like this fact, let me know by letter, my Doctor! For out of your Brother's words, I realized that you're not quite agreeable with it. But this is certainly true that, when the parish gained

your brother as its pastor, I was so pleased that I was moved to flow with steams of tears. How did the plague happened to us, I will tell you, when I am come to you. I want Brother-in-law Wolfgang as a companion. But by foot I can not come, a horse I do not have, and with business it is not possible. As for your sister Katherine, know that, on Wednesday after midnight, in the same hour as your Anna, my dear granddaughter, had in the night before, that is, on Tuesday (as your letter reports), fell asleep in the Christ in the presence of us parents and the family. How I felt there, you can imagine yourself. That distinguished aristocrat Nicholas von Heßberg has proven to be very impressed with your benevolence, as he has expressed personally to me. How is your mother doing, you'll hear from our Wolfgang. May the Almighty GOD bring her [3](#)) and her two daughters-in-law or better daughters in grace a safe delivery for His praise and for the propagation of Christianity and of the family of the, blissfully and gently resting in the Christ, Hugo Mörlin! "I think that the Mörlin clan will not wither away. It would be too damaged, because (Thank God forever) they [are] too healthy." [4](#)) Farewell! Greetings to you and all of your Mother, Sisters and the whole family . . .

Letter 3.

24 January 1546 (To Göttingen)

Grace and Peace of the Christ, whose blessing be with your new mother, my dear daughter, and with the grandson and the whole family, my best son and Reverend Doctor! The paper of Dr. Luther, which I have forwarded in accordance with the Brother regarding the Doctorate [5](#)), may do him good. He will do so on the advice of the others, who are smarter than I am. In the past year, he has had to depend upon mine, his father's, advice, [and] celebrated his wedding for the second time [6](#)), but, from the letters you had sent to him, I have seen that I had advised him badly. I hoped that your Reverence had graced the wedding with your presence. But, deceived in my hope, I myself thought that, if you had been invited to the wedding of a relative, you would have willingly gathered yourself a single piece of gold and endowed it on the bride and groom, like your Brother, yet you still preferred to wait for a whole year. What is this meanness, not to say this greed, in you, My Lord? On the top of that, it has made me a little upset that your Brother had to pay the messenger. Such unseemly behavior does not become a Doctor of Theology and even less for such a wonderful Bishop, who knows exactly how the chosen Armor of St. Paul makes a Bishop. [7](#)) This admonishment, my son, take it as fatherly and friendly [advice]! With us, everything is healthy, but everything is also quite expensive. With strong and good wine, the LORD has blessed me. Mother, Brother and Sisters are well, thank GOD. The Mother gave birth on 13 July to a son, who is named after my dear late father Hugo. It is in the childbed the wife of Maximilian has had a daughter Apollonia. So our family increased to the Glory of the Almighty GOD. As for me, it is just bad. Because since Easter I have been in bed three times and in such a way that everyone said unanimously that I was out of it and was sure in several places [= times] that I was already dead. May the Almighty GOD bless me with His Father's favor and calls me, if it seems good to Him, from this evil world with a good and happy "little hour" [Stündlein = death]. What you write about the Duchess [8](#)), I do not like. I fear that she limps with her

son [9](#)) with both legs. [10](#)) She wants to serve the Christ and Belial. [11](#)) They say, they are weighted with the Gospel, but they resent the Brunswicker oppression and imprisonment. [12](#))

If I were like you, I would give them passages from the Gospel to keep in mind - Matthew 10, Verse 37 : "Whosoever loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me". Likewise, Matthew 16, Verse 24 ; Mark 8, Verse 34 ; Luke 14, Verse 26, etc. You may handle them as you wish, as it befits a true Servant of the Word! As for the partridges, I have nothing at hand. I have been to the [partridge] house in this year only five times.

On 26 January, your Mother and I were invited by your Brother, but, because of the flooding, we could not go to the first church service of his wife in Coburg. There are greetings in my and your Mother's name to all of you, your wife, children, Wolfgang and the whole family, especially the Administrator Simon, "with my bülhin".

Letter 4.

13 July 1546 (to Göttingen)

Grace and Peace from GOD the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ to you and yours, my dear son and Doctor! There is nothing more than what I would rather have, that you would be provided by us with a superintendent or any other position worthy of you, especially since I see that you are reluctant to tarry among the Saxons, perhaps because of the coarseness of the food and the greed of the people. Oh, how I wish that you still had that position in Arnstadt! [13](#)) The whole city, indeed the whole area, is waiting for you with such longing! But enough of it! As for my situation, so everything is in order, except that I am very often plagued by [a kidney] stone. And that we are floating in the greatest dangers because of the chaos of war in your and other nations. May the Almighty GOD turn them to good and destroy with His powerful arm all enemies of the Gospel! That this may be done, let us pray steadfastly through our unremitting and pious prayers! As for my position, as you were told by our dear brother-in-law Wolfgang, GOD will lead you back to health. So farewell, my son, and keep me fondly as your Father in the flesh, as you tend! Greetings to you and all of yours, Mother, Brother and Sisters . . .

Letter 5.

3 July 1548 (to Göttingen)

. . . I have received your letter in which you comfort me, your father, as you can, as would a pious son with his father. For you know my innate timidity, so I need your much needed consolation from you and your brother. The Almighty GOD will send me, you and the brother, as well as all ministers of the Word His Holy Spirit, this true Comforter, Who consoles us in this very dangerous time, and shows us His Grace, so that we may prove to remain steadfast in the Confession of his Word. Because there is nothing in the whole world, that would be exposed to greater and heavier dangers than the pulpit of the preacher and the ministry of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as I see from your

letter : May the LORD be with you as He had been with the divine Peter and Paul, as He was in the Acts of the Apostles! Know also, my son, that the LORD has blessed me with His abundant blessings on June 1 with a son . . .

Letter 6.

18. March 1549 (to Göttingen)

, , , I have received from you two letters, in which you wish to report at first, that the delivery of your wife has gone bad. How much that has pained me, I can not express to you by mail. I fear that those dangerous times have caused the event. But again, I am comforted by Luther's and Bugenhagen's writings on the 29th Psalm about unbaptized children. How it has pleased the LORD, whose will shall be done and has been done. Know also that I have endured great pain for the whole Advent season, because of the [kidney] stone and other diseases. I have taken only a little bit of food to me the potion gets me. I see furthermore, my son, that you are very worried about your father . . . Because you want to know what secret I hold, if I want to stand firm in the pure and fair teaching of the Gospel. **14)** I, although a very timid and pusillanimous man, have decided and asked with other ministers of the Word of the Superintendent, who replied that I would not fall off the pure and true doctrine of the Gospel . . . You pray for me, your aged father who is now in his 60th year, to the LORD that He would send me His Holy Spirit, which will make bold and brave to withstand all dangers for the sake of the Gospel. I can not and do not know no more to write. Because I do not read "because the Teutonic kathenfftlin". . . **15)**

Letter 7.

01 October 1549 (to Göttingen)

. . . There is nothing I wanted more now than I ever have to have you with us . . . I was recently in Coburg with Maximilian, who treated me most honorably and had invited several highly respected men to honor me, and most magnificently and brilliantly hosted them. From what I hear from Master Simon and others, I believe that you will not remain long in Göttingen. **16)** The LORD do it with you, as it will be good and healthy for you and yours and the Church of Christ. The LORD is the Earth and its bounty. **17)** If they persecute you in this city, flee to another! **18)** Show yourself only as a brave soldier of Christ! . . . I am no longer on the side of Wittenberg. It seems to me that they are flattering the Emperor, especially Bugenhagen. But you stand firm in the faith, be manly and be strong in the LORD! **19)** How do I feel, as you would say, "my bülhin". . .

Remarks :

1) Probably Disputatio ad dictum Luc. XIX : Vade, vende, relique omnia! Wittenbergae 1540 [Latin, "Discussion of the Theme of Luke 19 : Go Thy Way, Sell, Leave the Rest! Wittenberg, 1540"] (Altpreußische Monatsschrift [Old Prussian Monthly], Vol. 44, p. 297).

2) Maximilian.

- 3) According to Letter No. 3, Jodocus Mörlin, who was in his 60th year in 1549 according to Letter No. 6, had a son born on 13 July 1545 and, according to Letter No. 5 another son born on 1 June 1548. He had 12 sons altogether. Except for Joachim und Maximilian who were born in Wittenberg, we know of only the one born in Westhausen, Stephan, who was Deacon from 1554 to 1561 in Coburg, then Pastor in Hildburghausen and died on 10 June 1604, and of a Georg, who was a schoolmaster in Westhausen in 1582.
- 4) These two sentences [are] also in German.
- 5) Maximilian Mörlin was the Doctor of Theology in Wittenberg on 15 March 1545.
- 6) That is not true. Realencyklopädie, Vol. 13, p. 249, states that Maximilian's first wife was a Wittenberger, who bore him two daughters and twelve sons, and, at the beginning of 1531, he was, as a 65-year-old widower, "was married for the second time to a good peasant". The Wittenberger probably was already the second wife.
- 7) I Timothy 3:3 : "Not stingy".
- 8) Elisabeth von Braunschweig-Lüneburg [2nd wife of Eric I, the Elder, the Duke of Brunswick-Lüneberg and Prince of Calenberg-Göttingen]
- 9) Eric the Younger [Eric II, the Duke of Brunswick-Lüneberg and Prince of Calenberg and, since 1495, Göttingen. Unlike his mother and first wife, Eric did not stay loyal to the Lutheran Church.]
- 10) See I Kings 18:21.
- 11) See II Corinthians 6:15.
- 12) Henry the Younger, the [last Catholic] Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, in an attempt to recapture his country in the autumn of 1545, was captured by the Landgrave Philip ["the Magnanimous"] of Hesse [one of the leaders of the Reformation].
- 13) The Count of Schwarzenburg [Gunter XL "the Rich" or "With the Fat Mouth"] deposed Joachim Mörlin as the Superintendent of Arnstadt on Martini [St Martin's Day, 11 November] 1543 but he was still allowed to preach and officiate until Easter 1544.
- 14) Joachim Mörlin seems to have added to his father that, as he himself did, he had to protest the Interim and also to condemn every flexibility in the Mitteldingen ["neutrality"] (in rebus adiaphoris [Latin, "in the matters of indifference"]). Jodocus gets him to understand that he had no desire to interfere in the theological disputes and ecclesiastical politics.
- 15) Probably = Catonian, see Endres, Luthers Briefwechsel [Luther's Correspondence] pages 15, 317, 154, Footnote No. 14 on p. 318 says : "from Cato, Disticha Catonis [Latin, "Distichs of Cato"], or from Catena [not a real author, just a pen name to cover all the nameless commentators], Bibelauslegungen [Interpretations of the Bible] (?)" . The latter appears to be more correct.
- 16) In December 1549 Duke Eric ordered the Council of Göttingen to expel Joachim Mörlin. On 18 January 1550 he was released and had to get out of the city. (Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte [Journal of the Society of the Church History of Lower Saxony], pages 34, 35, 37 ff).
- 17) Psalms 24:1.

[18\)](#) Matthew 18:23.

[19\)](#) I Corinthians 16:13.