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Luther: A Blessing to the English

VI. Lutheran Progress

John Skelton, poet-laureate of Oxford, Cambridge, and Louvain, whom Erasmus called "a light and ornament of British literature" and poet-laureate Southey also praised fabulously, was the most popular and audacious writer of his day. Tutor to Henry VIII, he scored the wicked courtiers. Cleric, he castigated the clergy. "Bestiall and untaught men," not able to read or spell their own names, they appoint as priests, preferring habitual drunkards that lead disorderly lives to worthy candidates. The theologians with a "lytell ragge of rhetoricke, a lesse lump of logicke, a patch of philosophy, tumbled in theology, were drowned in dregges of divinite, posing as doctoures of the chayre at the taverns." His "Colin Clout" blames all the woes of England on the clergy and mentions

Some have smacke
Of Luther's sacke,
And a brennyng sparke
Of Luther's warke.

The powerful Wolsey is "a malyncoly mastyf and mangyre curre dog." In "Why come ye nat to courte?" he prays

God save his noble grace,
And grant him a place
Endless to dwell
With the devil in Hell!
For I undertake
He would so brag and crack
That he would then make
The devil to quake!

Roy's *Satire* says of the clergy —

Make the company great or small,
Among a thousand find thou shall
Scant one chaste of body or mind.

Joanna Leman would not take the blessed bread from her "Horsyn preste."

Maria da Pozo wrote Francis Spinelli from Rome, January 9, 1524: It is said the pope will make him [Luther] cardinal to quiet him, provided he choose to accept the grade. These Lutheran affairs harass the pope. Believes this will be the deluge of the Church.

Bishop Gian Matteo Giberti of Verona late in April wrote Melchior Lang, the nuncio in England: "Lutheranism is increasing, to the peril of Christendom. . . . If simple remedies will not suffice, the emperor should use fire and sword. . . . The pope expects great results from the king's help, considering the recent efforts of the cardinal of York to prevent this horrible plague from planting its foot in his kingdom. The king has gained great honor by being

the first to oppose this monster. The pope is the pilot of the ship, which will perish with him if his warnings be not regarded."

On May 9 John Clerk and Thomas Hannibal write Wolsey Campegi wished him to make some demonstration against Lutheranism in London and to threaten "the hedds of Steeds and of that fellowship in London" (Hanse merchants) with the loss of their privileges unless they root out this heresy from their cities.

Bishop John Longland of Lincoln on January 5, 1525, wrote Wolsey about Wolsey's proposal for making a secret search in several places at once; and that Wolsey would be at the (St. Paul's) Cross with the clergy and have a notable clerk to preach against Luther and those who brought Lutheran books into England; after which, proclamation should be made for all who possessed copies to bring them in by a certain day, on which sentence of excommunication should be fulminated against all who disobeyed and those convicted compelled to abjure or be burned. All merchants and stationers are to be bound not to bring them in. The king is as good and gracious in this quarrel of God as could be . . . as fervent in this cause of Christ, His Church, and maintenance of the same, as ever a noble prince was. . . . The world is marvelously bent against the faith, and it is the King's grace and you that must remedy the same.

On January 16 Wolsey wrote John Clerk, now bishop of Bath: "Now that the Lutheran sect is so rapidly spreading through Germany, France, Spain, Flanders, Denmark, Scotland, and perhaps England, the pope should try to check it by some act tending to the reformation of enormity, and the observance of Christ's laws, or else it is hard to know how much the malice of the ghostly enemy might work or have power in them. . . . The Lutheran heresy makes it necessary to act wisely and speedily, lest Germany be estranged from the Church and the evil example do much harm in England."

In 1525 the kings of England and France made a treaty against the Turk and "the Lutheran sect, hardly less dangerous than the Turk."

In 1525 John Bugenhagen, usually called Pomeranus, sent a letter to the faithful Christians in England. John Bale, the future bishop of Ossory, gave it in English. "A compendious letter which Jhon Pomerane of Wittenberge sent to the faithful cristen congregation in England."

More replied to Bugenhagen: "They fight against faith and deny Christ, who, while they extol only grace and faith, deny the value of works, and make men callous to living well. . . . "Do you contend that it is false to say that your faction has wasted Germany by tumult, slaughter, and rapine? Do you dare call those liars

who affirm that your doctrine is the cause of it all?"—the Anabaptist insurrection and the Peasants' War. Later he even blames Luther for the kaiser's sack of Rome in 1527.

On September 21 Wolsey wrote the king from Boulogne: "The princes may elect a new king of the Romans, or else a new emperor, for repressing Luther, and bringing Germany into a better order and obedience."

"Hamilton was the first man after the erection of the university who put forth a series of theses to be publicly defended. These theses were conceived in the most evangelical spirit and were maintained with great learning. It was by my advice that he published them," says Francis Lambert of Avignon, the first French monk to be converted by Luther's writings and the first president of Marburg in Hessen, the first Protestant university.

Hamilton's theses are based on Luther's *Freedom of a Christian Man*.

Bishop John Leslie says Hamilton was filled "with venom very poisonous and deadly . . . soaked out of Luther and other arch-heretics." In prison he converted Canon Alexander Alane, whom Melancthon called Alesius, Wanderer. Hamilton was burned early in 1528. His theses were translated by John Frith and embodied by John Knox and John Fox, and so *Patrick's Places* became a cornerstone of Protestant theology both in Scotland and in England.

On May 11, 1528, the following were examined. Thomas Hemsted, who confessed his wife, Joan, had taught him the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed in English, which she had learned from Gilbert, a shipwright; William Bocher, Robert Hemsted, John and Edmund Tyball, Robert Faire, John Chapman, Thomas Hilles, William Browne, John Craneford, and the friars Gardyner, John Wyggen, Thomas Topley, and William Gardyner.

Humphrey Monmouth, a wealthy cloth merchant, who lived near the Tower, went to Rome and got an indulgence from guilt and punishment, and made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. "When Luther's doctrine came first into England, Monmouth was an embracer of it." He bought and studied Luther's works and "had all the marks of a Scripture man." He heard Tyndale preach, was impressed, and took the needy scholar into his home. Here Tyndale read Luther, and now "Luther occupied the highest place in his esteem and exercised very considerable influence over his opinions."

On May 14, 1528, Sir Thomas More searched Monmouth's house and ministered articles against him.

1. That he knew that Luther and his opinions were condemned as heretical, and that his books were prohibited in England, in April, 1521.

2. That he has bought and kept many books by Luther and his sect.

3. That he has helped and given exhibition to persons occupied in translating the Bible, and making erroneous books from it; as Sir William Hochin *alias* Tyndalle, priest, and friar Roye, an apostate Observant.

4. That he helped Tyndalle and Roye to go to Almayne to study Luther's sect.

5. That he had books of Luther's translated into English, as well as his book *De Libertate Christiana*, and his exposition upon the Pater Noster.

6. That the *De Libertate Christiana* was written in the beginning and drawn out of St. Augustine's works, and the exposition of the Pater Noster ascribed to Hilarius, to blind and abuse the readers.

7. That he has helped the translation of the New Testament by Tyndal and Roye, as well as its printing and importation.

8. That he has read and kept the translation after it was openly forbidden as being full of errors.

9. That he has kept and read an English introduction to St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

10. That other books, full of errors, translated into English, have been sent to him by Tyndalle.

11. That he has been privy to the printing beyond sea, of detestable English books against the sacrament of the Altar, the Mass, and other observances of the Church.

12. That he has caused books by Luther and friar Lambert to be translated into English.

13. That he has eaten flesh in Lent.

14. That he has said and believed that faith without works is sufficient to save a man's soul.

15. That all men are not bound to observe the constitutions of the Church.

16. That we should pray to God, and not to Saints.

17. That Christians are to worship God only, and not Saints.

18. That pilgrimages should not be used.

19. That men should not offer to images in Church, nor set lights before them.

20. That contrition and confession to God alone are sufficient for a man in deadly sin.

21. That no man is bound to keep fast days.

22. That pardons granted by the Pope or a bishop are not profitable.

23. That he is considered an advancer and favorer of Luther and his heresies.

24. That the above is true and notorious, and commonly reported in London and elsewhere.

He was flung into prison.

On June 4, 1528, Tayler writes Wolsey about John Corbett, one of his servants, well learned both in Greek and Latin, in good letters he has wonderful felicity and capacity and insuperable diligence. He had to "take a pen and paper, and write his mind with his own hand, as far as he knoweth himself infect in Luther's opinions, and by whom he was moved and what companions or favorites he hath had or hath, adherents to the said Luther's heresies." Hopes Wolsey will have compassion of [his young] age.

Next day Tayler writes that at midnight Corbette rose, "saying he went *ad opus naturae*." "The cecesse was without the chamber." As he returned not, his fellows sought for him, but he could not be found. Has sent to Paris and Roan in search of him. Hopes he shall be excused for his facile credence.

On June 5, 1528, Sir Robert Winfield writes the bishop of Bath by Wolsey's command has taken certain of Martin Luther's scholars at Paris, who have accused a priest of this town [Calais], named Philip Smyth, otherwise Fabry. The priest's chamber was well furnished with books, 12 or more of Luther's or his favorers; all of which he put into a pillowbere and sealed, and committed the priest to Wolsey's commissary. The priest had Luther on Peter, Jude, the Galatians, and *De pseudo-Epistolis*. Francis Lambert on the 12 Minor Prophets, *De causa*, &c., and his Paradoxes. Melanchthon on St. Paul to the Romans and to the Corinthians, and on the Gospel of St. John. The Psalter of Pomeranius. John Oecolampadius on Isaiah. The New Testament of Erasmus, his *De Libero Arbitrio*; the two parts of his *Hyperaspistes* against Luther.

He had these books two years and a half. Thinks Luther should not be condemned except by a General Council.

Francis Dynamis [Strong?] on June 19, 1528, confesses to Wolsey a previous acquaintance with George Constantine, Simon Fish, Thomas Bilney, and others, whom he abhors as pestiferous followers of Luther, at whose suggestion he had translated into English the first book of Francis Lambert "*De Causis excaecationis multorum seculorum*," and a letter which Bugenhagen sent "To the Faithful in Anglia." He had visited Paris and spent ten months in Constantine's house, where he had bought Luther's works and others, and the New Testament in English, with an "Introduction to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans," etc.

But being taken and committed to prison, these books were

found among his effects, and he was brought before the English ambassador at St. Germain's, Bishop Clerk of Bath. He ends by bespeaking the usual clemency of the cardinal.

Friars William Roy and Jerome Barlow at Strassburg printed *Rede me and be not wrothe*, based on Niclas Manuel's famous *Krankheit der Messe*, a violent attack on the English clergy and especially Wolsey.

A dialog of Wolfgang Resch was translated by Walter Lynne under the name of *Dialog of Two Sisters*.

Cardinal Wolsey feasted his eyes on a play which was a satire on Luther, likely some connection with John Hasenberg's *Ludus ludentem Luderum ludens*.

On July 28 Richard Harman writes the kaiser he has been put in prison by the margrave of Amsterdam for selling English New Testaments to a merchant out of England and for harboring Lutherans in his house.

Tyndale published *The obedience of a Christen man and how Christen rulers ought to governe. . . .* At Marlborow in the lande of Hesse. The seconde daye of October. Anno MCCCCC. xxviij by me Hans luft."

"So thoroughly Lutheran in its thought that it reads like a translation of the reformer's own words," says Preserved Smith. The king cried out: "This book is for me and all kings to read!" Strype declares it made Henry shake off the rule of the Pope.

On October 15, 1528, an unknown heretic confessed about four years ago Joan, daughter of one Dyer of Tynchenfeld, taught him the 1st chapter of James. One Quynntyne, butcher, taught him the 2nd chapter of James. John Tyball read Paul's Epistles and the Evangelists to him. Went with Sir Richard Fox, John Tyball, John Smyth, friars Topley and Gardyner, to the house of one Gilbert, shipwright, where they read the New Testament and talked of heresies. They also met at Bowre Hall, Mother Bocher's, and Mother Charte's, where sometimes Fox, or the respondent, or John Smyth, would read the New Testament in English, in presence of them and their households. About a year ago last Whitsuntide, being in London with John Tyball, went to friar Barnes at the Friars Augustines, to buy New Testaments. Found him reading the New Testament to a young gentleman, with a chain round his neck. Each of them bought a New Testament for 3s. Read it in the houses of Roger, a tanner, Gyfford, Bower Hall, Mother Bocher's, and Mother Charte's, and at last sold it to Fox.

Dr. Philip Faber [Smith] after December, 1528, thanks Wolsey for absolving him from his errors at the intercession of Cardinal Campeggi for holding heretical communications with one Dynamis, who had come to Calais two or three years ago. When he said

he followed Lyranus, Dynamis facetiously replied, "Forget the delirium of Lyra, and take this new preacher of the Gospel," giving him Luther's *Abrogation of the Mass, Exposition of Daniel's Vision, The Eighth of Daniel*; which he had not seen before. He also received from him three books which Dynamis had bought at Antwerp, viz., Melanchthon on Romans, Matthew, and Luther's *Unfree Will*. Melanchthon on John and Corinthians, with Francis Lambert on the *Rule of the Minorites*, he had resold to James Yates; and some other volumes in English and German, which he had copied out with his own hand.

"The playe called the foure PP. A newe and a very mery enterlude of A palmer, A pardoner, A potecary, A pedler. Made by John Heewood" [Heywood] came out about 1528. Froude says it is full of Lutheran doctrine, but we find in it only a satire of the corrupt condition of the church.

"This was still the age of blasphemous and saturnalian parody, when feasts of the ass, the bull, and the Innocents were celebrated before cathedral altars."

Cardinal Campegi, credited with five bastards, found the royal rascal reading Luther's books. On April 3, 1529, he wrote: "I told the king this was the devil dressed in angel's garb in order that he might the more easily deceive. I represented that by Councils and theologians it had been determined that the Church justly held her temporal goods.

"His Majesty remarked the Lutherans say these decisions were arrived at by theologians, insinuating it was now necessary for the laity to interpose. Then he attacked the wickedness of the papal court."

It seems the leaven of Luther's *Address to the Nobility of the German Nation* was now leavening the lump of the head of the English nation.

In 1525 Simon Fish, a lawyer of Gray's Inn, in a play acted the part of Cardinal Wolsey and then fled over the sea to Tyndale. About 1529 he wrote *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars to the King ovre Souereygne lorde.*"

"For verey constreint they die for hunger . . . by the reason and [that] there is . . . craftily crept ynto this your realme an other sort (not of impotent, but) of strong, puissaunt, and counterfeit holy, and ydell, beggers and vacabundes, whiche . . . are nowe encreased vnder your sight, not onely into a great nombre, but also ynto a kingdome. These are (not the herdes, but the rauinous wolues going in herdes clothing, deuouring the flocke) the Bisshoppes, Abbottes, Priours, Deacons, Archdeacons, Suffraganes, Prestes, Monkes, Chanons, Freres, Pardoners and Somners. And who is abill to nombre this idell, rauinous sort, whiche (setting

all labours a side) haue begged so importunately that they haue gotten ynto theyre hondes more then the therd part of all youre Realme."

Five orders take 20 pence a year from every house, or in round numbers 43,333 pounds, 6 shillings, 8 pence.

"England stoud tributary vnto a cruell, deuellissh bloudsupper, dronken in the bloude of the sayntes and marters of Christ. . . .

"The haue to do with euery mannes wife, euery mannes doughter, and euery mannes mayde, that cuikkoldrie and baudrie shulde reigne ouer all emong your subjects, that noman shulde knowe his owne childe. . . .

"These be they that haue made an hundreth thousand ydell hores yn your realme. These be they that corrupt the hole generation of mankind in your realme; that catche the pokkes of one woman, and bere theym to an other; that be brent wyth one woman, and bere it to an other; that catche the lepry of one woman, and bere it to another; ye, some one of theym shall bost among his felawes, that he hath medled with an hundred wymen. . . .

"Where is youre swerde, power, crowne, and dignite become, that shulde punissh (by punisshement of deth, euen as other men are punisshed) the felonies, rapes, murders, and treasons committed by this sinful generacion? . . .

"Who is she that wil set her hondes to worke, to get .iij. d. a day, and may haue at lest .xx. d. a day to slepe an houre with a frere, a monke, or a prest? What is he that wolde laboure for a grote a day, and may haue at lest .xij. d. a day to be baude to a prest, a monke, or a frere? Whate a sort are there of theime that mari prestes souereigne ladies, but to cloke the prestes yncontinency, and that they may haue a liuing of the prest theime silues for their labour? . . .

"Whate remedy: make lawes ageynst them? Are they not stronger in your owne parliament house then your silfe? . . .

"This is the great scabbe why they will not let the newe Testament go a-brode yn your moder tong, lest men shulde espie that they, by theyre cloked ypochrisi, do translate thus fast your kingdome into theyre hondes . . . that they are cruell, vnclene, vnmerciful, and ypochrites, that thei seke not the honour of Christ, but their owne, that the remission of sinnes are not giuen by the popes pardon, but by Christ, for the sure feith and trust that we haue in him. . . .

"Take from them all these thynges. . . . Then shall the gopell be preached. . . ."

A copy of this eloquent indictment came into the hands of Anne Boleyn, and through her the king got it and put it into his bosom.

Sir Thomas More tried to wipe out the deep impression made by Fish by writing the *Supplication of the poore sely soules pewling out of Purgatory*. The souls scoff at the author of the *Beggars*, "sometymes scoldyng and rayling at hym, callyng hym foole, witlesse, frantike, an asse, a goose, a madde dogge, an hereticke, and all that naught is." Such is the wit of England's greatest wit.

Parable of the Wicked Mammon appeared in 1529—Tyndale's work on justification by faith, based on Luther. More calls it "a very treasury and well-spring of wickedness, a book by which many have been beguiled and brought into many wicked heresies."

An Exposition in to the seventh chaptre of the first pistle to the Corinthians. At Malborow in the londe of Hesse. MDXXIX .xx daye Junii. By me Hans Luft. Translated by Tyndale.

A Pistle to the Christen Reder. The Revelation of Antichrist. Antithesis wherein are compared togeder Christes actes and our holye father the Popes. [At Marl] borow in the land of Hesse: xij day of Julye Anno MCCCCxxix. Hans luft. — Luther's *Pas-sional Christi et Antichristi* of 1521.

Tunstal helped make the Treaty of Cambray, ended on August 5, 1529, which embraced "the forbidding to print or sell any Lutheran books." While at Antwerp, he met Augustine Packyngton, a mercer and merchant of London, who offered to buy up all English New Testaments. "The Bishop, thinkyng that he had God by the too, when in deede he had (as after he thought) the Deville by the fiste, said, 'Gentle Master Packyngton, do your diligence and get them, and with all my harte I will paie for them, whatsoever thei cost you, for the bokes are erronious and naughte, and I entende surely to destroy them all, and to burn them at Paule's Crosse. . . ."

"An so forward went the bargain. The Bishop had the bokes, Packyngton had the thankes, and Tyndale had the money."

Ever more New Testaments came into England, and so Tunstal asked Packyngton how that came. "It will never bee better as long as thei have the letters and stamps, therefore it were best for your lordshippe to bye the stamper to, and then are you sure."

The Bishop smiled at him and saied: "Well, Packyngton, well," and so ended this matter.

Curate George Constantine of London helped Tyndale and Joy in translating the New Testament, passed and repassed the sea, taking the Testament and Luther's works to England, and was arrested and jailed.

Lord Chancellor More said: "Constantine, there is beyond the sea, Tyndale, Joye, and a greet many mo of you. I knowe thei cannot lyve without helpe, some sendeth them money and suc-

cowreth them, and thyself beyng one of them, haddest parte thereof, and therefore knowest from whence it came. I praie thee who be thei that thus helpe them?"

"My Lorde, will you that I shal tell you the truthe?"

"Yea, I praie thee."

"Mary I will. Truly, it is the Bishoppe of London that hath holpen us, for he hath bestowed emong us a great deale of money in New Testamentes to burne them, and that hath and yet is our only succoure and comfort."

"Now by my trothe, I thynke even the same, and I said so muche to the Bishop, when he went about to bye them."

Constantine betrayed his companions and the shipmen who brought in the books.

Henry ordered Wolsey to free the prior of Reading, in prison for Lutheranism, "unless the matter is very serious."

The Reichstag had time and again presented the famous Hundred grievances against the clergy, and on November 3, 1529, England followed the example. This Parliament is known as "The Parliament for the enormities of clergy." Bishop Burnet says the laymen were favorers of the Lutheran teaching in their hearts.

All the clergy could do was to cry "Heretics! Lack of faith!" Bishop John Fisher cried: "For God's sake, see what realm the kingdom of Boheme was, and when the church fell down, there fell the glory of the kingdom. Now with the Commons is nothing but 'Down with the church,' and all this meseemeth is for lack of faith only."

The saintly sage was forced to apologize, but "he stooped to an equivocation too transparent to deceive any one."

The bishops said: "In the crime of heresy, thanked be God, there hath no notable person fallen in our time. Truth it is that certain apostate friars and monks, lewd priests, bankrupt merchants, vagabonds and lewd idle fellows of corrupt nature, have embraced the abominable and erroneous opinions lately sprung up in Germany, and by them have been some seduced in simplicity and ignorance. Against these, if judgment have been exercised according to the laws of the realm, we be without blame. If we have been too remiss or slack, we shall gladly do our duty from henceforth."

They did — with a vengeance.

"By the procurement and sedition of Martin Luther and other heretics were slain an infinite number of Christian people" in Germany. That must not happen in England; and so, in 1529 the King issued "A Proclamation of resysting and withstanding of most dampnable Heresyes, sown within this Realme by the Disciples of Martin Luther and other Heretykes, Perverters of Christes Re-

ligyon." He published an Index of Prohibited Books with the title: *Books of the Lutheran sect or faction imported into the city of London.*

"Dr. Martin Luther Concerning Good Works. Letter of Luther to Pope Leo X. Tassaradecas Consolatoria of Martin Luther. Tract of Luther Concerning Christian Liberty. Sermons of Dr. Martin Luther. Exposition of the Epistles of St. Peter by Martin Luther. Reply of Martin Luther to Bartholomew Catharinus. Of the Works of God by Martin Cellarius. Deuteronomy, from the Hebrew, with annotations of Martin Luther. Luther's Catechism in Latin by J. Lonicerus. The Prophet Jonah, explained by Martin Luther. Commentary of Martin Luther on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians. Selection from the letters of Martin Luther, full of piety and learning, with the interpretations of several psalms. Narrations of Postils of Martin Luther upon the lessons from the Gospels, etc. Sixteen Conclusions of the reverend father, Martin Luther, concerning Faith and Ceremonies. Most Wholesome Declaration of the same concerning Faith and Works. Most Learned Explanation of Ceremonies. Fifty Conclusions by the same for timid consciences, Luther's Explanation of his thirteenth proposition Concerning the Power of the Pope. Oration of Didymus Faventinus [Melanchthon] on behalf of Martin Luther. New Narrations of Martin Luther on the prophet Jonah. Judgment of Martin Luther Concerning Monastic Vows. Enchiridion of Godly Prayers of Martin Luther. Several brief Sermons of Martin Luther on the Virgin, the Mother of God." Also works of Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, Brentz, Rhegius, Carlstadt, Agricola, Bucer, and others — all "books of the Lutheran sect."

More writes: "Although these books cannot either be there printed without great cost, nor here sold without great adventure and peril, yet with money sent hence, they cease not to print them there and send them hither by the whole sacks full at once, and in some places, looking for no lucre, cast them abroad at night; so great a pestilent pleasure have some devilish people caught with the labor, travail, cost, charge, peril, harm, and hurt of themselves to seek the destruction of others."

More wished Catholics were half so zealous "as those that are fallen into false heresies and have forsaken the faith, who seem to have a hot fire of hell in their hearts that can never suffer them to rest or cease, but forces them night and day to labor and work busily to subvert and destroy the Catholic Christian faith by every means they can devise."

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(To be continued.)