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Luther: A Blessing to the English

VI. Lutheran Progress

(Continued)

In 1529 Latimer at Cambridge in his two famous Sermons on the Card urged the universal reading of the Bible. He was opposed by prior John Buckenham in a sermon on Christmas Dice.

On April 3 the Catholics were threatened with Luther and his followers.

On December 6 Henry told the Kaiser's Swiss ambassador, Eustace Chapuys: "So far Luther has told nothing but the truth; and had he limited himself to attacking the vices, abuses, and errors of the clergy, instead of attacking the Sacraments of the Church, everyone would have gone with him; he would himself have written in his favor and taken pen in hand in his defense. He pointedly praised Luther, though mixing heresy in his books, which was no good reason for rejecting the many truths he had brought to light."

That comes pretty near to an apology from the proud English king to the humble German monk.

Tyndale's translation of the five books of Moses was "Emprinted at Malborow in the lande of Hesse by me Hans Luft the yere of our Lorde M.CCCC.XXX. the XVII dayes of Januarij." Westcott says: "The spirit and even the style of Luther is distinctly visible." Some called Tyndale "nothing more than an English echo of the great German heresiarch." "Those best acquainted with the theology of the English Reformation will be the first to admit that we shall look in vain in Cranmer, Latimer, or Ridley for any such clearness of apprehension and precision as here displayed by Tyndale."

Thomas Hitton, a minister of Kent, brought a New Testament from Antwerp — burned February 20.

On May 14 Bishop Nix of Norwich complained to Archbishop Warham: "I am accombred with such, as kepith and redith these arronious boks in English, and beleve and gif credence to the same, and teacheth others, that they shuld do so. My Lorde, I have done that lieth in me for the suppression of suche parsons; but it passith my power, or any spiritual man for to do it. For dyverse saith openly in my Diocesse, that the King's grace wolde, that they shulde have the saide arroneous boks, and so maynteyneth themself of the Kinge. . . . Marchants, and suche that hath ther abyding not ferre from the See (are affected). . . . A Curat, and well lerned in my Diocesse, exorted his Parisheners to beleve contrary to the Catholic faith. There is a Collage in Cambridge,

called Gunwel haule. I here of no clerk, that hath comen ought lately of that collage, but saverith of the frying panne, tho he spek never so holely."

Soon after, Archbishop Warham again wrote Cardinal Wolsey: "With respect to the most accursed works of Luther, I have received through the doctor mentioned [Sampson] certain pamphlets which I will most diligently read and note."

Wolsey spoke of the "hellish Lutheran heresy."

In May Bishop Stokesley of London burned New Testaments and many other books in Paul's churchyard.

On May 17 Cromwell wrote Wolsey: "Certain doctors of both the universities are here for the suppression of the Lutheran opinions. The King's highness hath caused the said doctors at divers times assemble, and hath communed with them. The fame is that Luther is departed this life. I would he had never been born."

On August 18 Cromwell writes Wolsey: "I think you happy that you are now at liberty to serve God, and banish all vain desires of the world, which bring men nothing but trouble and anxiety. Wherefore, in mine opinion, your Grace being as you are, I suppose ye would not be as ye were to win a hundred times as much as ye were possessed of."

Archbishop Edward Lee of York denounced the Greek New Testament. Standish, a favorite preacher of the king, on his knees begged Henry to destroy it, for it would destroy the Christian teaching.

Bishop Stokesley of London said it was "abusing the people to give them liberty to read the Scriptures," and the great and good Thomas More called it "a design to depreciate the authority of an ordained priesthood and of an organized Church." Quite true, the Bible and the papal Church do not get on very well together. Writing against Alesius V of Scotland, Cochlaeus, the Romish theologian, says: "The New Testament translated into the language of the people is in truth the food of death, the fuel of sin, the veil of malice, the pretext of false liberty, the protection of disobedience, the corruption of discipline, the depravity of morals, the end of concord, the death of honesty, the well-spring of vices, the disease of virtues, the instigation of rebellion, the milk of pride, the nourishment of contempt, the death of peace, the destruction of charity, the enemy of unity, the murder of truth."

On May 24 Archbishop Warham, Tunstal, Gardiner, More, "with the king's highness being present," drew up a bill to be published by the preachers. It stated that in spite of the widespread feeling it was not the king's duty to have the Bible in

English spread among the people. The king, "by the advice and deliberation of his council and the agreement of great learned men, thinketh in his conscience that the divulging of this Scripture at this tyme in Englishhe tonge, to be committed to the people . . . shulde rather be to their further confusion and destruction then the edification of their soules."

Even in this assembly there were "three or four that would have had the Scriptures to go forth in English," as one most boldly writes the king: "The which thing also your grace hath promised by your last proclamation; the which promise I pray God that your gracious Highness may shortly perform, even today before tomorrow. Nor let the wickedness of these worldly men detain you from your godly purpose and promise."

In 1528 Robert Barnes fled to Germany under the name of Anthonius Amarius and entered the University of Wittenberg as Antonius Anglus. He wrote "Sentences collected from the Doctors which the papists today very impudently condemn." He defends his Lutheran teaching and denounces the "delicious living" and "sumptuous palaces" maintained by bishops "by false feigned holiness in deceiving and robbing the people." If laws against lay control of the clergy "be not of the devil, tell me what is of the devil?"

He wrote it "this summer in our house," says Bugenhagen, who wrote a two-page foreword. It was printed at Wittenberg by Joseph Clug in 1530. A Basel edition has an eight-page "Epistola" by Bugenhagen.

The next year Bugenhagen translated the work: "Fuernehmlich Artickel der Christlichen Kirchen." The Wittenberg edition was followed by another at Nuernberg.

On November 14 Stephen Vaughan took a presentation copy to the king: "A Supplication unto the most gracyous prynce Henry the VIII." A London edition came out in 1534.

Simon Fish put out *The summ of the Scriptures Tr. from the Dutch into English*—likely the *Summa Christlicher Lehren* of Urbanus Rhegius.

On November 27 Chapuys reports to the Kaiser: "The Lutheran merchants have been no otherwise punished than by being paraded through the streets, and being compelled to burn their books; so where one spoke of them before, 100 speak of them now."

William Barlow, one of the early "Lutherans" of Cambridge, fell from the true religion and in 1530 wrote "A dialoge describing the original ground of these Lutheran faccions and many of their abuses." One of the speakers heard Luther, Melanchthon, and Pomerane. The Lutherans have better scholars but not better Christians. Later Barlow recounted and returned, became "a man

of many motions and promotions," and a most successful father-in-law—of the bishops of Winchester, Hereford, Lincoln, Lichfield, and Archbishop of York.

Tyndale's *Practice of Prelates* defends Luther against the king.

Tyndale's brother, John and Thomas Patmore, merchants, and another young man spread the New Testament. Lord Chancellor More had them ride with their faces to the horse tail, having papers on their heads, and the New Testaments and other books to be fastened thick about them, pinned or tacked to their gowns or cloaks, and at the standard in Cheap themselves to throw them into a fire made for that purpose: and then to be heavily fined, Strype tells us.

On December 25 a foreigner wrote to Florence: "Nothing else is thought of in that island every day, except of arranging affairs in such a way that they do no longer be in want of the pope neither for filling vacancies in the church nor for any other purpose."

The Praier and Complaynte of the Plowman of February, 1531, has the bishops and priests denounce the Lutherans as "they that trouble all the world with their new learning."

The divinity students had to swear off the teachings of Wiclif, Hus, and Luther.

Thomas Patmore read the works of Luther, Melanchthon, and Pomeranus, for which Bishop Stokesley jailed him.

On February 24 Henry wrote Bishop Tunstal: "Considering what the Church of Rome is, it is no schism to separate from her and adhere to the Word of God. To follow the Pope is to forsake Christ. It is to be trusted the papacy will shortly vanish away."

In May the New Testament was burned at Paul's Cross. Why? The king was told it was faulty. Henry ordered the best learned men to make a better one so that the people should not be ignorant of God's law.

"Saint" Bilney was arrested in 1529; three times he refused to recant, the fourth time he fell. For two years he was most miserable, and then "he would go up to Jerusalem" like Christ to His death. He preached justification by faith only in the fields, he gave away a New Testament.

Dr. Warner went with him to the stake with many tears, but Bilney with a cheerful countenance exhorted him to feed his flock, that at his Lord's coming He might find him so doing. Then the fire was set to, and his body consumed to ashes, Nov. 10, 1531. One witness was Matthew Parker, one of the "German Lutherans" of Cambridge, later archbishop of Canterbury.

Prior John Ashwell in 1527 wrote Bishop John Longland of Lincoln about George Joye, a bold advocate of "Lutronous opin-

ions." But he begs "that no creature maye know that I or any of mine do shew you of these thinges, for then I shal leusse the favor of many in my contree."

The letter fell into the hands of Joy, and he fled to Strassburg and on June 10 published Ashwell's "fower opynyons . . . wyth the answeere of the said George unto the same opynyons"—in the main a defense of justification by faith. In 1531 he got out *The Prophet Isaye*.

Monk Richard Bayfield was converted by Robert Barnes and then imported Testaments and Lutheran books, twice in 1530 and once in 1531, which he landed, for the more privacy, in different places: as once in Colchester, the next time at St. Katharine's, London, and the last in some port in Norfolk; where he brought them to London in a mail.

He brought five of Luther's works, five of Melancthon's, four of Brenz', three of Bugenhagen's, and others. "Which being smelled out, he was seized on, and examined about these books: he justified them and said, he thought they were good and profitable, and did openly exclaim against the dissolute lives of the clergy; so he being judged an heretic, he was burned in Smithfield the eleventh of November"—1531.

Luther's "Liberty of a Christian Man" was translated by John Tewksbury, a shopkeeper in London. On December 20, 1531, the gentle More burned "the stinking martyr."

Bishop Gilbert Burnet in his *History* says that until the year 1531 "there was no dispute about the presence of Christ in the Sacrament; for the writings of Zwingli came later into England; and hitherto they had only seen Luther's works, and those written by his followers."

Lord Chancellor More attacked Stephen Vaughan for heresy in 1529; yet the king next year sent the Lutheran heretic to Augsburg to borrow money from the great international banking house of the Fuggers and to get hold of William Tyndale.

On June 19, 1531, Stephen Vaughan wrote Cromwell from Antwerp: "I have spoken with Tyndall and shewed hym as you wrot me the Kyngs royall pleasure was, but I fynde hym alwayse syngyng one note. You wrot that the answer whiche he made to the Chancellour was unlucky done. And so seme all his works to eloquent men, bycause he useth so rude and symple stile, nothing sekyng any vaine praise and commendation. If the Kyngs royall pleasure had byn to have loked theruppon he shuld then have better judged it, then upon the sight of an other man. The Prophetts "Esay" and "Jonas" are put forthe in the Englishe tonge, and passethe any mannes poore to stopp them from coming forthe.

"I cannot come by the boke of Luther; there cam but one to all this Towne, and was gonne or I receyved answer.

"I have another put forthe by Melanchton in the laten tonge, whiche I obteyned while I wrot this, and wold have sent it yow, but the berer thought it so greate. It is intituled *Confessio Fidei exhibita invictiss. Imp. Carolo 5. Caesari Aug. in comitiis Augusti*. I wold gladly sende such things to his Highness, but I am infourmed he lookethe not upon them hym self, but commyttethe them to other. I am sory he so dothe, by cause I know his high judgement in lernyng to be such as myght safely, without daungier, approve mennes opynons by reding thereof. And trustyng t' other men may haply be desceyved."

Cromwell replied the King thought him "veraye remysse and slow in mynstryng to His Majestie." Vaughan wrote the King: "As touching a yong man being in thies parties named Frithe, of whome I lately aduertised your Magiestye by my former lettres, and whom your royall Magiestie geueth me in commandment withe frendly parswasions, admonyntions, and holesome counsaylls, to aduertise to leue his wilful opinions and errowrs and to returne into his natyue contrey: I shall not fayle accordinge to th' utter most of my power to perswade hym accordinglye, so sone as my chauce shalbe to mete with hym. Howbeit I am informed that he is very lately maryed in Hollande, and ther dwellethe, but in what place I cannot tell. This marriage maye by chauce hynder my perswasions. I suppose hym to haue byn therunto drynen throughe pouuertie, which is to be pitied, and his qualities considerid.

"I haue agayne byn in hande to perswade Tyndall and to draw hym the rather to faour my perswasions and not to thinke the same fayned, I shewed hym a clawse conteyned in Maister Crumwells lettre contynyng these words followinge, 'And notwithstanding other the premisses in this my lettre conteyned, if it were possible by good and holsom exhortacions to reconsile and conuerte the sayde Tyndall from the trayne and affection whiche he now is in, and to excerpte and take away the opinyons and fantasies sorely rooted in hym, I doubte not but the Kings royall Magestie is so inclined to mercie, pitie, and compassion, that he refuseth none who he seythe to submyt them self to the obedience and good order of the Worlde.' In these wordes I thought to be such swetnes and vertue as were able to perse the hardest harte of the worlde, and as I thought so it came to passe, ffor after sight thereof I perceyued the man to be excidinge altered and to take thesame very nere vnto his harte, in suche wise that water stode in his yees: and answered, 'What gracious wordes are these, I assure you,' sayed he, 'if it wolde stande withe the Kings most gracious pleasur to graunte only a bare text of the Scriptures to

be put forthe emongs hys people, like as is put forthe emongs the subjectes of the Emperour in thies parties, and of other Cristen Princes, be it of the translation of what person soeuer shall please His Magestie, I shall ymedyatly make faythfull promyse neuer to wryte more, ne abide ijo dayes in these parties after the same; but ymedyatly to repayre into his realme, and there most humbly submyt my selfe at the fete of his roiall Magestie, offerynge my bodye to suffer what payne or torture, ye what dothe His Grace will, so this be obteyned; and till that tyme I will abide th' asperance of all chaunces what so euer come, and indure my lyfe in asmoche paynes as it is able to bere and suffer, and as concerning my reconsiliacon His Grace maye be assured that what soeuer I have sayed or written, in all my lyfe, ayenst th' onour of Goddes worde and so proued, the same shall I before His Magestie and all the worlde vtterly renownce and forsake; and with most humble and meke mynde imbrace the truthe, abohrringe all error, soner at the most gracious and benygne request of his royall Magestie, of whose wisdom, prudence, and lernynge, I . . . so greate prayse and commendation, then of any other creature lyuing, But if those things whiche I haue written be true and stande with Godds worde, why shulde his Magestie hauynge so excellent a guyfte of knowledge in the Scriptures, moue me to do any thinge agenst my conscience: with many other words whiche were to longe to writte. Fynally I haue some good hope in the man, and wolde not doubte to bringe to some good poynt, were it that some thing now and then myght proceed from your Magestie towards me, whereby the man myght take the better comfort of my perswasions.

"I advertised the same Tyndall that he shulde not put forthe the same booke, tyll your most gracious pleasure were known; wherunto he answered, myn aduertisement cam to late, for he feared lest one that had his copie wolde put it very shortly in prynte, whiche he wolde lett if he coulde: if not there is no remedy. I shall staye it asmuche as I can: as yet it is not com forthe, ne will not in a while by that I perceyue.

"Luther hath lately put forthe a worke agenst th' Emperour in the German tongue, which I wold cause to be translated into Latin, and send it to your Magestie, if I knew yor gracious pleasure. In it were manythings to be seen."

Oak Park, Ill.

(To be continued)

WM. DALLMANN