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William Dallmann

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Henry the Eighth's Divorce and Luther

By WILLIAM DALLMANN

II

AN IMPRESSIVE SPECTACLE

On June 21, 1529, the King and the Queen of England stood at the bar of Cardinal Campegi, an Italian judge.

The Queen appealed to Rome and walked out on him!

THE POPE BREAKS HIS PROMISE

The Kaiser "turned on the heat" and the Pope called the stenchy mess back to Rome and thus broke his papal promise given again and again and again. In other words, he bade Campegi return without publishing the decretal bull declaring Henry's first marriage null and void.

Nothing new. When Benvenuto Cellini rebuked him for breaking a solemn promise, the Vicar of Christ ironically joked he had power to bind and to loose!

The Pope said to Bishop Jerome Ghinucci bigamy would be less scandalous than divorce. Elliott-Binns declares: "Pope Clement VII said bigamy was the only way out — quite natural for one who traveled with two 'wives.'"

The Catholic Ludwig von Pastor writes: It was hoped the King would "abstain from asking the Pope to grant what could only be granted with injustice, danger, and scandal."

The Catholic Hilaire Belloc says the Pope promised not to revoke the case to Rome, "but to give careful orders that neither Henry nor Wolsey, let alone any lesser man at the English court, should have possession of the documents, and

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that they should be destroyed at once after the King had seen them. To put it in plain English, Clement made a solemn promise which he intended to break. . . . History has never forgiven him."

The Catholic historian Lingard says Pope Clement VII signed a paper authorizing Cardinal Wolsey to decide the question of divorce in England as the papal legate, granting Henry a dispensation to marry, in the place of Catherine, any other woman whomsoever, even if she were already promised to another or related to him in the first degree of affinity. (*Hist. Engl. VI, 128. Ed. 1848.*)

Prof. G. Constant of the Catholic Institute of Paris writes: "Stephen Gardiner was instrumental in obtaining the famous secret decretal deciding the case in Henry's favor, and which the Pope afterwards regretted having granted."

Thurston admits: Clement "was brought up in all the bad traditions of Italian diplomacy . . . made himself a party of the French king's perfidy . . . at last yielded" and signed the decretal. (*Clement VII, Vol. 4, Cath. Encycl.*)

The Jesuit Hartmann von Grisar admits: "For a while Clement had hesitated on the question of bigamy, since, in view of Cardinal Cajetan's opinion to the contrary, he found it difficult to convince himself that a dispensation could not be given, and because he was personally inclined to be indulgent and friendly."

The Catholic Stephan Ehses admires the Vicar of Christ as "a clever diplomat," but must admit "the decretal bull permitted divorce, contradicted the faith and dogma of the Church, and would peril the moral life of the people in the highest degree."

On March 27, 1530, Cardinal Gabriel de Grammont wrote King Francis "that the Pope had told him more than three times in secret he would be glad if the marriage between Henry and Anne was already made, either by dispensation of the English legate or otherwise, provided it was not by his authority or in diminution of his powers of dispensation and limitation of divine law."

THE UNIVERSITIES

In 1530 the King sent Thomas Cranmer with 50,000 crowns to win favor for the divorce. Dr. Croke, tutor of the Duke

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of Richmond, friend of Erasmus, and the best Greek at Cambridge, got the universities of Orleans, Bourges, Toulouse, Bologna, Ferrara, Pavia, Padua to decide for the divorce. Though it went against the grain, even Reginald Pole won the university of Paris, which cost Henry more than a million francs.

Thomas More said the opinions of the universities had been honestly given, and those of Oxford and Cambridge were enough to settle the question.

THE CONVOCATIONS

The Convocations of Canterbury and of York overwhelmingly declared against the power of Julius II to grant the dispensation.

THE PROTESTANTS

Simon Grynaeus was to win the Protestants. Calvin advised the queen be put away. Zwingli thought the marriage should be dissolved. Erasmus favored "two Junos." Bucer, Capito, Hedio, and Zell agreed.

Andrew Osiander was against the divorce, but Cranmer won him over, and the king sent him a present of money and Cranmer married his niece.

A GREAT PETITION

On July 13, 1530, a petition was sent to the Holy Father forthwith to dissolve the marriage or else —. It was signed by Cardinal Wolsey, Archbishop of York and the Pope's personal representative and censor of morals; Archbishop William Warham of Canterbury; four other bishops; twenty-two abbots; two dukes; two marquises; thirteen earls; twenty-seven barons; and eleven other soldiers and doctors.

In August Cardinal Grammont and Francis both urged Henry to marry Anne at once, before any dispensation, believing with the help of France the Holy Father would ratify the union.

On September 18 Sir Gregory Casale wrote: "A few days since the Pope secretly proposed to me that Your Majesty might be allowed two wives." This agrees with Miguel Mai's report to the Kaiser, and Wolsey informed Campegi of this plan.

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"It cannot be denied," asserts Bishop Gilbert Burnet, "the English Eusebius," in his "immortal" *History of the Reformation*.

On October 27 Bishop William Bennet of Worcester reported the Pope had spoken of a permit to have two wives. "I asked Clement VII if he were certain that such a dispensation was admissible, and he answered that he was not; but he added that a distinguished theologian had told him that in his opinion the Pope might in this case dispense in order to avert a greater evil; he intended, however, to go into the matter more fully with his council. And indeed the Pope has just now informed me that his council [known as the Consistory of Cardinals] had declared to him plainly that such a dispensation was not possible."

That "distinguished theologian" is very likely Cardinal Cajetan, who held polygamy not against the law of nature and nowhere forbidden in the Old Testament in his commentaries on Genesis and Paul's Epistles.

FRENCH ADVICE

On April 16 Chapuys wrote the French ambassador had told him Henry should take the woman he liked and waste no more time and money, as Louis XII in 1499 had repudiated his first wife, Jeanne de France, and married Anne of Brittany, widow of Charles VIII, in order to annex her duchy.

BRIBERY

Micer Mai wrote Karl's secretary, Covos: "The cardinals will not stir, but quietly pocket the ducats which come from the Kaiser, and the larger sums which come from the English, who are lavish in spending." (Ortiz to Karl, July 28, 1532.)

AN ULTIMATUM

The Defender of the Faith and the Most Christian King met at Boulonge at the end of October, 1532. Cardinals Grammont and Tournon were sent to tell the Pope if he would not call a Council, the two kings would and invite the Lutheran princes; if he excommunicated Henry, he would go to Rome for absolution so well accompanied the Pope would be glad to grant it; the Pope was to give judgment for Henry's divorce, "otherwise the kings of France and England would throw off the Pope's authority in their several realms."

A FORCED CONFERENCE

In 1533 the Holy Father visited Francis at Marseilles and married Niece Catherine de Medici to the King's second son, the future Henry II. He told Cifuentes that had he not gone, Francis would have broken with Rome; the King pressed him "violently" to give the divorce; Henry's cause was just and he would give sentence in his favor if he submitted to the Pope.

On September 17 Francis wrote Henry if by a formal act he would acknowledge the Pope, the Pope would at once legalize the second marriage.

THE POPE LOSES ENGLAND

In January, 1534, Parliament ended the "usurped authority of the Bishop of Rome" and made the King the head of the Church of England and declared the marriage with Catherine null and void. In the summer almost all the clergy abjured the Pope's supremacy.

THE EXCOMMUNICATION

On March 24 the Holy Father at last in secret consistory pronounced final sentence against the King. Cardinal Farnese urged to reconsider that fatal step, but in vain. He allowed this opinion to be known. He wrote Henry he had a right to his divorce and Pope Clement had done him great wrong. He became Pope Paul III and said he had in private remonstrated with Clement and with the Kaiser at Bologna in favor of Henry's divorce. And yet the Holy Father banned King Henry and tried to dethrone him for disobeying a sentence confessed to be unjust.

A CATHOLIC ESTIMATE

Chapuys wrote Karl on December 9, 1533: Many Catholics were bitter against Rome and Romanism. The Duke of Norfolk was the loudest of them all, calling the Pope a liar and a bad man.

EXIT CLEMENT

The Pope died on September 25, 1534. Rumor had him poisoned by the Florentines and by the French. Cromwell said: "The Great Devil is dead." The good Romans gleefully stabbed the corpse of their Holy Father. "Efforts were

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made each night to pollute or deface his temporary burial place in St. Peter's; it was smeared with filth. It was planned to drag the corpse from the coffin and draw it through the streets." The inscription was changed from "Clemens" to "Inclomens."

LUTHERANISM GROWS

Lord Darcy said measures were to be taken in Parliament to favor the Lutherans. . . . He was going to rebel.

Lord Hussey said he could not longer remain in a country being driven into heresy — meaning Lutheranism.

ENTER THE CHAMPION

Luther against the world at Worms — for himself: Luther again against the world — this time for an enemy.

Almost the whole world favored the divorce, and yet the King was not happy: one voice was missing in the chorus — that of a plain man in a "mud hole on the border of civilization."

Henry had read Luther's books and praised him to the Pope's legate, Cardinal Campegi, and to the Kaiser's ambassador, Eustace Chapuys. And now the "Defender of the Faith" tried to win the man whom he formerly had attacked vehemently.

In 1531 the zealous Lutheran Robert Barnes of Cambridge, who had fled to Germany, was to win Luther for the divorce.

Luther said, "No!"

William Paget was with Landgrave Philip of Hesse at Rothenburg and got him to urge Luther to please the King for political reasons.

Luther did not know how to play the game of politics in church matters and answered his letter to the King of September 2 had already been sent on the 4th by Barnes.

The King was angry at the monk's refusal and dismissed the innocent Barnes "with much ill will."

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. The very next day the King sent William Paget, who came on August 12, 1532, and told Kaiser Karl's pun on the Duke of Buckingham, "It is a pity so noble a buck should be slain by such a hound" — King Henry. Paget had been "an earnest Protestant" at Cambridge, read and spread Lutheran books, later

became Lord Secretary of State; yet even to this able diplomat Luther said, "No!"

"Since I can do nothing else, my prayer is directed to God that Christ may hinder this divorce and make void the counsels of Ahithophel in persuading it, and that the Queen may have firm faith and constant assurance that she is and will be Queen of England, even though the gates of the world and of all hell may oppose."

On June 16, 1533, Luther presided at a disputation on theses by Melanchthon when John Bugenhagen, Caspar Cruciger, and John Aepinus were made Doctors of Theology and Barnes took part. It goes without saying he was there for the divorce.

Another disputant was Canon Alexander Alane, just fled from Scotland, where he had been converted by Patrick Hamilton, the first Scotch Lutheran martyr. Melanchthon dubbed him Alesius, Wanderer, also known as Aless.

Bishop Gilbert Burnet tells us: "The English ambassadors on March 12, 1535, voiced Henry's desire when they requested the princes of the Schmalkald League in all future councils to use their influence to get Luther, Justus Jonas, Cruciger, Bugenhagen, and Melanchthon to approve his divorce" (*Hist. VI, 161; Pocock, Records*).

On March 11 Barnes, "Our Chaplain and Professor of S. Theology," was again in Wittenberg, "treating only of the second marriage of the King." Luther said, "No!"

On Barnes' request Melanchthon on the 13th lettered the King with fulsome flattery and urged "a simple and sure form of doctrine," and: "Care ought to be taken that cruelty be not inflicted upon good men."

On his return Barnes was hastily returned on July 8 to keep Melanchthon from going to France on the invitation of King Francis I.

Also on Barnes' suggestion Melanchthon in August dedicated the second edition of his *Loci on Romans* to "the most learned of kings, not only in theology but also in philosophy and astronomy," not as a patron, but in order to study and criticise the book! It was sent by Alesius, "pursued by an elegy by Stigelius."

On October 1 the *theologus coronatus* answered that nothing could have pleased him more than this book, which

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ought to be accepted by everybody. "Your friend, King Henry VIII," who sent a present of 70 pounds, acknowledged on December 1.

On September 14 Barnes was present at the doctor promotion of Jerome Weller and Nicholas Medler and partook of the "splendid banquet" cooked by Kate Luther in honor of her "housefriend" Weller.

On the 18th Barnes and the Elector at Jena arranged for an English embassy.

"*Ille niger Anglicus* — that black Englishman," as Luther called Barnes, was again in Wittenberg in October and on the 6th wrote Cromwell: "There is a great preparing for Master Almener [Almoner, Bishop Edward Fox] at the Elector's castle." Of course they talked divorce, and Luther said, "No!"

On November 7, a Sunday, Papal Nuncio Peter Paul Vergerio invited Luther and Barnes to the castle. Though Barnes did not go, Luther with his characteristic speeches acted as the spokesman for Barnes also, as he informed Jonas.

On December 11 Melanchthon wrote Bucer about articles to be submitted to a General Council, which had been corrected by Luther and sent to England. (*Letters and Papers IX, 320.*)

On the 28th from Gotha Barnes wrote Cromwell about the divorce: "Martin is much fairer to our cause than formerly; Jonas does not oppose; Philip seems to be with us. Only Pomeranus resists bitterly, but I do not despair of a happy success. . . . Remember us with more money. . . . I have here at my charge to the kinges honore V horse."

A ROYAL EMBASSY

On New Year's Day, 1536, all Wittenberg was agog with eyes as big as saucers. The famous King Henry's stately embassy of forty horsemen trotted into the old town, where Dr. Robert Barnes with five horse was awaiting them, Bishop Edward Fox of Hereford, later secretary of state, and Archdeacon Nicholas Heath, later Archbishop of York and lord chancellor; Barnes was the King's chaplain and professor of s. theology.

"Luther lovingly embraces them and is even delighted by their courtesy," we are told by Melanchthon, who took a liking to Heath. Luther highly respected his brother

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Augustinian Barnes, while Frederick Myconius waxed enthusiastic and rated him "the dear, highly learned, and most efficient man all England had."

Bishop Edward Fox was the representative of the King of England and had been his ambassador and argued with Pope Clement himself and seems to have been imbued with his importance, but Luther got along fairly well also with him.

Why all this pomp and circumstance, such as the King displayed only in his embassies to King Francis, Kaiser Karl, and the Vicar of Christ? The King's main reason was to win Luther for his divorce, the man he had called a "wolf of hell," the man who had repeatedly said no to his request. What a dramatic tribute to the power of Luther!

On Saturday, the 29th, there was a disputation "Against the Private Mass," in which Fox took part. Luther spoke of the right, Christian manner in which princes were to get "private mass" from their court chaplains, no doubt glancing at Barnes, who had just been made the King's chaplain. They wanted to form a union between their Church of England and the Lutheran churches, and so they discussed doctrines. Without great trouble they agreed on the Wittenberg Articles of 1536, based mainly on the Augsburg Confession.

The thorny point was the King's divorce. Fox had argued that case with Pope Clement himself and had all the points at his fingers' ends. Luther joked: After eleven universities have already given their decision, it seems the whole world will be lost "unless we poor beggars, the Wittenberg theologians, be heard."

"In other respects I will show myself not unfriendly towards them, in order that they may not think we Germans are stone or wood"—and his appeasing amazes us—but as to the divorce he would stand by the Queen against the King and once again say, "No!"

In June 1540 Luther remarked: "The word would have brought me three hundred fl., but I didn't want to." Did they try bribery?

Bishop Gilbert Burnet comments: "It cannot be denied that the Protestants proved their sincerity in this matter, such as became men of conscience, who were actuated by true principles, and not by maxims of policy. If these had governed them, they would have shown themselves more

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compliant with so great a prince, who was then alienated from the Pope and on ill terms with the Emperor."

The Rev. Canon T. C. Hammond, M. A., principal of Moore Theological College, Sydney, Australia, broadcast a defense of Luther against Dean Inge, printed in *The Watchman* of May, 1945. On the divorce he said: "Luther did not hold that any ruler was the author of religious experience. He held with a desperate tenacity that God had once for all revealed His will to man. When God spoke, we had no other course open to us in righteousness but to obey. He resisted the claim of Henry VIII to divorce Catherine of Aragon, even when it would have greatly assisted him to win the support of that very powerful prince. It does not matter for the moment as to who was right in a very difficult situation created by that liability of Julius II. It is sufficient to notice that when the English Roman Catholic Bishops were all in favor of supporting Henry, Luther stood out against him."

Luther said no almost alone against almost the whole world. He said no though it helped the staunch Catholic Catherine, aunt of Kaiser Karl, who was eager to burn him. He said no though it harmed the Lutheran cause in England. What a chivalrous knight adventuring to help a lady in distress! The Tempter dangled before the Reformer's eyes the kingdom of England and all the glory of it, but he said: "Get thee behind me, Satan!" (Luke 4:8.)

"Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not" (Ps. 15:1,4).

It was Luther who gave the red light to divorce; it was Pope Clement VII that gave the green light to divorce.

Quod ERAT demonstrandum!

Oak Park, Ill.

