

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

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Book Review

Vol. XXXIX

April 1968

No. 4

Thomas More and the Wittenberg Lutherans

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A man for all seasons" was also a polemicist, although this is not generally noted. Some of Thomas More's biographers,¹ writers about the relationships between Henry VIII and Martin Luther,² one biographer of Luther,³ and a

few scholars about the 16th century⁴ have told in some detail the story about the relations between More and Luther. Only Sister Gertrude Donnelly investigated these relations comprehensively.⁵ One can learn something about some aspects of these relations from secondary sources, although the accounts may be distorted. Sometimes reference is made to the polemic More wrote against Bugenhagen.⁶ No writer seems to have noticed, or at least has not thought it worthwhile mentioning, that More never wrote against the Wittenberg humanist, Philipp Melancthon. The present investigation is an attempt to summarize the relations between Thomas More and the Wittenberg Lutherans, not, however, including More's attacks against

¹ Algernon Cecil, *A Portrait of Thomas More: Scholar, Statesman, Saint* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937), pp. 193—207. However, R. W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), p. 193, has only a brief reference to this topic. W. E. Campbell, *Erasmus, Tyndale and More* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1949), pp. 148—52, 220—22, does not mention More's work, under the pseudonym of William Ross, against Luther. E. E. Reynolds, *Saint Thomas More* (London: Burns and Oates, 1953), pp. 163—66, has noted the book by "Ross." Christopher Hollis, *Sir Thomas More* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1934), pp. 124—28, 139—46. Theodore Maynard, *Humanist As Hero: The Life of Sir Thomas More* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1947), pp. 139—47. Thomas Stapleton, *The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More*, trans. Philip E. Hallett, ed. E. E. Reynolds (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), p. 31.

² Neelak S. Tjernagel, *Henry VIII and the Lutherans: A Study in Anglo-Lutheran Relations from 1521 to 1527* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), pp. 24—25; Erwin Doernberg, *Henry VIII and Luther: An Account of Their Personal Relations* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1961), pp. 35—37; Preserved Smith, "Luther and Henry VIII," *English Historical Review*, XXV (October 1910), 656—69; William Dallmann, "King Henry Attacks Luther," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, VI (June 1935), 419—30.

³ Hartmann Grisar, *Luther*, trans. E. M. La-

mand, ed. Luigi Cappadelta (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Tübner & Co., Ltd., 1915), III, 70; IV, 9; V, 110; VI, 246.

⁴ E. g., Robert P. Adams, *The Better Part of Valor: More, Erasmus, Colet, and Vives on Humanism, War, and Peace, 1496—1535* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962), pp. 195, 274—76; H. Maynard Smith, *Henry VIII and the Reformation* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1948), p. 412.

⁵ Sister Gertrude Joseph Donnelly, *A Translation of St. Thomas More's Responsio ad Lutherum with an Introduction and Notes*, vol. XXIII of the *Catholic University of America Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Latin Language and Literature* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1962). Printed too late for consideration by this writer was John Headley, "More against Luther: On Laws and the Magistrate," *Moreana*, XV (1967), 211—23.

⁶ Tjernagel, pp. 28—30; Reynolds, *Saint Thomas More*, pp. 166, 167.

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his countrymen who were in Wittenberg, William Tyndale and Robert Barnes.⁷

I

Martin Luther took notice of More's *Utopia* in 1518; the Wittenberg scholar was alive to the world of books,⁸ at least at this stage of his career as a 34-year-old professor of theology. There is no record of his reaction to More's work, however.

Thomas More took notice of Luther, particularly of his attack on Henry VIII, after the latter had penned the *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*.⁹ No attempt will be made here to give all the details of More's writings against Luther. Only a few facts will be noted to make this summary more rounded.

In 1523 More wrote his severest attack against Luther.¹⁰ It was a Latin work, first

published under the pseudonym of Ferdinand Barvellus,¹¹ and then under the pseudonym of William Ross.¹² In it, in accordance with the polemical style of the day, More quoted the *verba Lutheri* and then brought counterarguments.¹³ A fa-

Gibson, *St. Thomas More: A Preliminary Bibliography of His Works and Moreana to the Year 1750* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961), No. 171, pp. 170, 171, includes a one-line summary. Cited as Gibson, *Bibliography*, Grisar, III, 237, comes to the defense of More's language, which, however, he does not translate. See also F. and M. P. Sullivan, *Moreana*, G-M, p. 55. One of the most distorted comparisons between More and Luther came from the pen of T. Meyrick, "Unknown Works of Thomas More," *Month*, XIII (1870), 295—304, 709—14, summarized in F. and M. P. Sullivan *Moreana*, G-M, pp. 320—22. "Luther delighted less in muck than many of the literary men of his age; but if he did indulge, he excelled in this as in every other area of speech." Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 298.

¹¹ Gibson, *Bibliography*, No. 62, pp. 82 to 83. The present writer has not seen the copy which Gibson lists.

¹² *Eruditissimi viri Guilielmi Rossei opus elegans, doctum, festiuum, pium quo pulcherrime reteggit, ac refellit insanas Lutheri calumnias: quibus inuictissimum Angliae Galliaeque regem Henricum eius nominis octauum, Fidei defensorem, haud literis minus q̄ (quam) regno clarum scurra turpissimus insectatur: excusum denuo diligentissime, digestumque in capita, adiunctis indicibus opera viri doctissimi Ioannis Carcellij* (London: R. Pynson, 1523). British Museum press-marks 1211. (2.) and 697.-d.12. Cited as Ross. A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475—1640* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1926), No. 18089. Cited as S.T.C. Gibson, *Bibliography*, No. 63, pp. 84—85. Donnelly, *passim*.

¹³ Rainer Pineas, "Thomas More's Use of the Dialogue Form as a Weapon of Religious Controversy," *Studies in the Renaissance* (New York: Renaissance Society of America, 1960), VII, 193—206.

⁷ Tjernagel, p. 57: "More's bitterest invective was to be reserved for Barnes and Tyndale." See also pp. 63, 124, 125, 146.

⁸ Luther to John Lang, Wittenberg, 19 Feb. 1518, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Herman Böhlau Nachfolger, 1930), I, 147, No. 60. Luther's works are cited as WA. Gottfried G. Krodel did not translate this letter in *Luther's Works: Letters I*, vol. 48 of the American edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963). Luther referred to the *Utopia* and *Epigrammata* published by Froben in Basel in March 1518. Frank and Majie Padberg Sullivan, *Moreana: Materials for the Study of Saint Thomas More*, G-M (Los Angeles, Calif.: Loyola University of Los Angeles, 1965), p. 251.

⁹ See references in n. 2 above.

¹⁰ Francis Atterbury, "An Answer to Some Considerations on the Spirit of Martin Luther and the Origin of the Reformation . . ." (Oxford, at the theater, 1687, included in Atterbury's *Sermons*, 1727), had some very disparaging remarks about More's book. See the 11-line summary in Frank and Majie Padberg Sullivan, *Moreana: Materials for the Study of Saint Thomas More*, A-F (Los Angeles, Calif.: Loyola University of Los Angeles, 1964), p. 33. R. W.

vorable reference to Erasmus¹⁴ and an unfavorable reference to Wyclif, Hus, Helvidius, Arius, Montanus, and all the pestilent Lutherans¹⁵ are contained in this work.

No good purpose is served in rehearsing the details of More's arguments against Martin Luther, and to recite the invectives he hurled against the German reformer (who was capable of returning blow for blow) would not enhance the prestige of either More or Luther. More seems to have had an especially bitter animosity against Luther, which did not allow him to state Luther's position correctly.¹⁶ He did not know Luther personally, but the leadership role played by Luther in a cause which More totally disavowed, Luther's attacks on Henry VIII, and his writings against Erasmus provide a partial explanation for this animosity. John Cochlaeus, Luther's bitter German foe, was More's chief informant about Luther. William Tyndale's affinity with Luther might be adduced as still another reason for More's feelings. More's *Dialogue* was directed specifically against Tyndale and Luther.¹⁷ He did not mention Melancthon.

¹⁴ Ross, fol. H. 17^v.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. HH 2^v-3^r. More developed his concept of the church between the Baravellus' edition and the Rosseus' edition of his 1523 attack on Luther. John M. Headley, "Thomas Murner, Thomas More, and the First Expression of More's Ecclesiology," *Studies in the Renaissance* (New York: Renaissance Society of America, 1967), XIV, 73—92.

¹⁶ More wholly distorted Luther's doctrine of justification and did not grant that Luther taught that the believer should do good works. His statements about Luther's position on the Eucharist are inadequate. He attacked Luther severely for his contradictions. See, e. g., Donnelly, pp. 224—29, p. 296, n. 97; Stapleton, *Life of More*, ed., Reynolds, pp. 121—22.

¹⁷ *A Dyaloge of syr Thomas More knyght:*

Among the Wittenbergers, besides Luther, More attacked Bugenhagen directly. John Bugenhagen (d. 1558), also known as Pommer or Pomeranus, Martin Luther's pastor and father-confessor in Wittenberg, addressed a letter to the English people in 1525 under the title *Epistola ad Anglos*.¹⁸ It was reprinted in 1526 with a response from John Cochlaeus,¹⁹ and again in 1530.

The English translation of Bugenhagen's letter was published in 1536 by an unnamed and unknown printer as *A compendious letter*.²⁰ More, who was beheaded in 1535, did not see this translation. However, he answered the Wittenberg pastor's letter (likely in 1526) with an epistle of his own. More's reply re-

one of the counsayll of our souerayne lorde the kyng and chancelloure of hys Duchy of Lancaster. Wheryn he treatyd dyuers maters / as of the Veneracyon & worsbyp of ymagys & relyques / praying to sayntis / & goynge on pylgrymage. Wyth many other thyngys touchyng the pestylent secte of Luther & Tyndale / & by the tother laboryd to be brought in to England (Newly ouersene; London: W. Rastell, 1530), S. T. C., No. 18085. It was first published in 1529, S. T. C., No. 18084. Gibson, *Bibliography*, Nos. 53, 54, pp. 73—74. The title indicates that it is directed against Luther. No attempt is made to list the pages on which Luther is named directly, but see especially ch. xxi of the first book, the first seven chapters and the twelfth chapter of the fourth book.

¹⁸ The British Museum copy, press-mark 3265.a.22(1.), was destroyed by bombing in World War II. Gibson, *Bibliography*, No. 212, p. 182.

¹⁹ *Epistola Iohannis Bvgenhagii Pomerani ad Anglos. Responso Iohannis Cochlaei* (s.n.s.l., 1526). B. M. press-mark 3906.f.21. The B. M. press-mark for the 1530 edition is 3907.a.40.

²⁰ *A compendious letter which John Pomerane curate of the congregation at Wittenberge sent to the faythfull christen congregation in Englande* (s.n.s.l., 1536). S. T. C., No. 4021. B. M. press-mark C.25.d.16(2.).

mained in manuscript, it seems until 1568, when it was printed in Louvain.²¹

In his reply More cited Bugenhagen's letter verbatim in sentences or sections and then brought his own counterarguments, again using a kind of verbal charge and countercharge technique. Repeatedly he addressed his opponent personally, *Pomerane*. He polemicized against Martin Luther directly also in this letter. In it, too, he mentioned Carlstadt, [Francis] Lambert, and Oecolampadius.²² Then he attacked Carlstadt and Zwingli, Luther and Oecolampadius because of their doctrines of the Eucharist.²³ He indicted Wittenberg University because it is, he said, against sacred letters, the doctrine of the saints, and the established customs of the whole church.²⁴ More also polemicized against the Lutheran doctrines of the church, Scripture and tradition, and justification. Melancthon is not included among the individuals attacked by name.

Bugenhagen's letter was short, consisting of 10 pages. He encouraged those who were suffering persecution in England, saying, "Christ is oure ryghteousnesse."²⁵ He included an exhortation to do good

²¹ *Doctissima D. Thomae Mori Clarissimi ac Disertiss. Viri Epistola, in qua non minus facetè quàm piè, respondet Literis Ioannis Pomerani, hominis inter Protestantas nominis non obscuri* (Louvain: John Fowler, 1568). B.M. press-mark 4136.a.68. Gibson, *Bibliography*, No. 61, p. 81. *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Elizabeth Frances Rogers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947). This edition will be cited because of its greater availability.

²² Rogers, *More's Correspondence*, p. 326, 55, to p. 327, 61.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 361, 1351, to p. 363, 1412.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 332, 233—241.

²⁵ *Compendious letter*, Sig. Aiiiif.

works as fruits of faith. Bugenhagen attacked no one by name, and his tone is anything but severely polemical. Perhaps it was because of Bugenhagen's prestige and the relatively wide circulation of his tract that More decided to answer him.²⁶ At any rate Bugenhagen did not know about More's answer.

More may have written his reply to Bugenhagen late in 1525 or early in 1526. Early in 1526, too, he took a direct hand in the action against the merchants of the Hanseatic League residing in the Steelyard in London. It is an interesting but little noted episode in More's life;²⁷ for that reason it will command more space in this account than it may seem to deserve.²⁸

²⁶ Tjernagel, pp. 28—30, calls Bugenhagen's letter "mild in tone" and suggests that it was due to Bugenhagen's importance that More attacked him. Reynolds, *Saint Thomas More*, pp. 166—67, finds More's reply to Bugenhagen important "for the clear statement More makes there of his attitude towards the papacy."

²⁷ One of the few accounts is found in Doernberg, p. 11, with due regard for More's role in it. For his account Pauli did not have the documents pertaining to More. Reinhold Pauli, "Die Stahlhofskauffeute und Luthers Schriften," *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humboldt, 1874), I, 155—62; *idem*, "Das Verfahren wider die Stahlhofskauffeute wegen der Lutherbücher," *ibid.* (1878), pp. 157—72.

²⁸ The most comprehensive treatment of this episode is found in M. E. Kronenberg's article "A Printed Letter of the London Hanse Merchants (3 March 1526)," *Oxford Bibliographical Society Publications*, New Series, Vol. I, fasc. i (1947), pp. 25—32. Kronenberg translates the letter and reproduces a facsimile of it. Gibson, *Bibliography*, no. 332. The present writer has a Xerox copy of the original letter in the British Museum, press-mark C.18.e.1-(94.). Kronenberg, p. 28, n. 1, notes a manuscript letter to Lübeck, dated 1 March 1526, almost identical with the Cologne letter of 3 March 1526, from *Hanserecesse von 1477—*

The Hansa merchants reported to the mayor and council of Cologne that on 26 January 1526, while they were at dinner, several members of the Royal Council with their retainers invaded the Steelyard. After the place and the merchants were put under guard, Sir Thomas More addressed the group, reminding them that one of their fellows had been arrested for clipping English coins. He also upbraided them for bringing Luther's books into the country. The account of More's role in this affair reads as follows:

So a knight, Sir Thomas Moir [sic], arose and addressed the Alderman and the whole group and said that they should not be frightened by their coming after they learned about the commands of his Royal Highness [Henry VIII] and were summoned by the Lord Cardinal [Wolsey]. And with that he told about the discovery of the Lord King's gold and silver coins in the possession of one of our men, that now at last he had been imprisoned. At the time his Royal Majesty did not take this as seriously and severely to heart, as he did the creditable report which came to his Grace that many of our merchants were guilty of obtaining Martin Luther's books and daily bringing more of them into England. Thereby a great error of the Christian faith was being spread among the

King's subjects and they knew that the Steelyard received them [the books] first.

After giving orders that a list of the Hansa merchants should be brought to him on the morrow, More and his company departed.

The next day, 27 January 1526, Sir Thomas appeared again; this time there were two clerks (*tzwene doctore*) in the company. Sir Thomas More again was in charge of the proceedings. He called for the Lutheran books in possession of the merchants. The merchants were divided into two groups (one group for each of the clerks) and each one was required to give an oath that he would destroy such books. The merchants' quarters were then searched.²⁹ On 11 February 1526 four merchants had to carry faggots in penance, while Lutheran books were being burned at St. Paul's Cathedral.³⁰

More's activities against the Hansa merchants go beyond the mere forbidding of the importation of Lutheran books into England.³¹ They were an aggressive measure, motivated in part, it seems likely, by Bugenhagen's direct address to the English, a piece of propaganda not to be ignored, and the printing of Tyndale's New Testa-

²⁹ B. M., press-mark C.18.e.1.(94.).

³⁰ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, from the Reign of Henry VIII*, eds. J. S. Brewer and James Gardiner (London, 1870 ff.), IV, i, 1962, pp. 884—86. Kronenberg does not connect the events of 26 and 27 January with those of 11 February.

³¹ S[idney] L[ee], "Thomas More (1478 to 1535)," *Dictionary of National Biography*, XXXVIII (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1894), 434, describes the printed circular of the Hansa merchants, with reference to the B. M. copy cited above in n. 29, in this way. Perhaps the Low German gave him difficulty. He dated the circular incorrectly as March 1527 instead of 1526.

1550, ed. Dietrich Schäfer and Friedrich Techen (Munich-Leipzig, 1913), IX, 402—4. Kronenberg, p. 27, believes that the Cologne letter was printed by Melchior von Neuss in Cologne. He agrees with Conrad Borchling and Bruno Clausen, *Niederdeutsche Bibliographie: Gesamtverzeichnis der Niederdeutschen Drucke bis zum Jahre 1800* (Neumünster: Karl Wacholtz Verlag, 1931), I, 390, No. 874. Kronenberg does not agree with the S. T. C. entry, No. 16778, which assigned the printer to London. Kronenberg's arguments for placing him in Cologne are convincing. Gibson, *Bibliography*, No. 332, agrees with Kronenberg.

ment. More gave evidence for his zeal for the preservation of the Roman Catholic faith in England by trying to stop up one of London's chief outlets of Lutheran books.

More's zeal was recognized by Bishop Tunstal, who granted him a license to read heretical books in order to refute them.³² Of course, this was also a recognition of his literary abilities and his knowledge of theology, although he was a layman.

A direct outcome of this license was More's *A Dialogue Concernynge heresyys*.³³ In it he lumped the Wittenbergers together as "blasphemouse heretiques" because they burned "the lawes of the church . . . singinge in derision a *Dirige* about the fire for the lawes soule."³⁴ Twice More named Johann Bugenhagen, using his Latinized name Pomeranus as a symbol of Luther's followers; ". . . he [Luther] and other Lutheranes," he said once, but more to the point, ". . . Luther & Pomerane, & all ye archheretikes of that sect. . ."³⁵ He contrasted Cyprian, Je-

rome, Ambrose, Augustine, Basil, Chrysostom, and Gregory with "frere Luther & his wyfe, prieste Pomerane & his wife, frere Huiskin & his wife, priest Carladius and his wyfe, Dañ Otho monke & his wyfe, frere Lambert & his wife, frantike Colins, & more frantike Tindall."³⁶ Melanchthon was a layman, and so he would not be included in this list, but More was not intent on enumerating or perhaps even knowing all the Wittenberg theologians. Justus Jonas seems to have been passed over simply because he was unknown to More.³⁷

More was also greatly disturbed by Luther's attitude toward the Turkish wars, perhaps not understanding Luther's view of history. Luther regarded the Turks as a visitation of God,³⁸ classifying happenings according to the dichotomy of judgment and grace, wrath and love.

More praised the Lutherans of Germany for their readiness to defend Christendom against the Turks in the *Dialogue of Comfort*, written during his final imprisonment. He prayed that God would "bring them together in the truth of His faith," and especially his readiness to "let God work" and to "leave off contention"³⁹ is in strong contrast to his earlier bitter-

³² Gilbert Burnet, *History of the Reformation* (London, 1679), I, 31; Gibson, *Bibliography*, No. 215, p. 183; *ibid.*, No. 158, pp. 162 to 163. *English Historical Documents, 1485—1558*, ed. C. H. Williams (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1967), pp. 828 f.

³³ S. T. C., No. 18084; cf. also S. T. C., No. 18080.

³⁴ *The Dialogue concerning Tyndale by Sir Thomas More . . .* ed. W. E. Campbell (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, Ltd., 1927), p. 251; *Modern Version*, p. 271. This edition is cited because of its greater accessibility; both the reprint of the original and the modernized edition are cited for completeness' sake. The reference is to the burning of the papal bull and the canon law at Wittenberg on 10 Dec. 1520.

³⁵ *Dialogue*, p. 267; *Modern Version*, p. 289.

³⁶ *Dialogue*, p. 287; *Modern Version*, p. 323.

³⁷ More was not always careful in weighing his evidence when he attacked the Lutherans. Citing Wolsey as his authority, he blamed the Lutheran *Landsknechte*, mercenaries, for the horrors of the 1527 sack of Rome, calling them "those uplandish Lutherans." Adams, p. 266.

³⁸ Adams, pp. 274—76, has a comprehensive statement of More's criticism, although he, too, like More, failed to understand Luther.

³⁹ Thomas More, *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, ed. Leland Miles (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1965), p. 36 (Part I, 12).

ness.⁴⁰ He still did not favor the Lutheran disparagement of fasting and "other bodily afflictions" as works meriting salvation.⁴¹ Lutherans argued against sorrow for sin, he stated, and used ridicule in arguing that they cheerfully got drunk and then "letting Christ's Crucifixion pay the bill."⁴² But even this was much milder than many things More had written against the Lutherans previously. Despite his relative mildness, however, More still did not understand Lutheranism or Luther's doctrine.

If More failed to understand Luther, he had an affinity for Melanchthon. At least his silence about Melanchthon seems to have been deliberate. When he referred to him, it was in noncommittal terms. There is no indication that More knew that Melanchthon had reissued Linacre's *De structura latini sermonis libros VI* in Wittenberg in 1531 with a preface addressed to Wilhelm Reiffenstein.⁴³ It was Melanchthon's tribute to English humanism. And even though More paid no tribute to Melanchthon's humanism directly, he respected his learning. More knew about the brief reference to Melanchthon in Cochlaeus' reply to Bugenhagen.⁴⁴ The references More made to Melanchthon in one of his letters to Erasmus⁴⁵ can be described only as objective,

entirely neutral in their reporting.⁴⁶ More received a report from Cochlaeus about Melanchthon's stand at Augsburg and the *Confessio Augustana* delivered to Emperor Charles V (1530),⁴⁷ but there is no extant record that More found it necessary to attack Melanchthon personally either for this document or its *Apologia* (1531).

What is perhaps a parallel of More's attitude toward Melanchthon can be found in his treatment of Simon Grynaeus. Although Grynaeus was an avowed Protestant, yet More tolerated him when he visited London in 1532. "I am keenly aware of the risk involved in an open-door policy toward these newfangled sects," More wrote Erasmus in explaining that he was on his guard against Grynaeus.⁴⁸ Grynaeus showed his appreciation of More's kindness to him by dedicating the second edition of his *Plato* (1534) to John More, Sir Thomas' son.⁴⁹ He referred

iversity Press, 1961), ep. 46, p. 179; *Opus epistolarum Erasmi*, ed. P. S. Allen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908—58), X, 259, ep. 2831.

⁴⁶ The reference to "those people" who are fretting about the Eucharist refers to Tyndale and his kind and not to Melanchthon. Rogers' footnote, *Selected Letters*, p. 179, n. 5, is cautious in describing Melanchthon's doctrine of the Eucharist as "Consubstantiation"; the term is one which Melanchthon himself would not have allowed of his doctrine.

⁴⁷ John Cochlaeus to Thomas More, Dresden, 26 April 1531, Rogers, *More's Correspondence*, ep. 184, pp. 431, 432.

⁴⁸ Rogers, *Selected Letters*, ep. 44, p. 176; Allen, X, 33, ep. 2659. The letter is dated 14 June 1532.

⁴⁹ Grynaeus to John More [Basle], 1 March 1534, Rogers, *More's Correspondence*, ep. 196, pp. 470—80; Rogers, *Selected Letters*, p. 176, n. 2; Stapleton, *Life of More*, ed. Reynolds, pp. 58—59.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38, n. 5; p. xxxvi.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 77—81 (Part II, 6).

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 81—82 (Part II, 7).

⁴³ *Corpus Reformatorum: Philippi Melanthonis Opera quae supersunt*, eds. C. G. Bretschneider and H. E. Bindseil (Halle/S., 1833 ff.), II, 481—84, No. 962.

⁴⁴ See n. 19 above. Sig. B.1.r.

⁴⁵ More to Erasmus, Chelsea [June ? 1533], *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters*, ed. Elizabeth F. Rogers (New Haven and London: Yale Uni-

also to his associations with John Harris, More's secretary and John's tutor.⁵⁰ Likely Sir Thomas More would have been tolerant to a greater humanist than Grynaeus, Philipp Melanchthon, although More did not express himself in this way. The comment of More's 16th-century biographer, Stapleton (he was not speaking about Melanchthon), has some bearing on a conjecture dealing with More's possible attitude to Melanchthon:

Of these learned men, then, More, himself eminent in learning, was the intimate friend. To these both at home and abroad, for the sake of their virtue and their scholarship, he was bound by the closest of bonds.

But what is astonishing in so fervent a Catholic and so zealous a defender of the Catholic faith is that he honoured men of learning so highly, solely with an eye to their literary attainments, that even to heretics eminent in literature he did not refuse his favour and his good offices.⁵¹

II

Now to look at the other side of the coin, what were the attitudes of the Wittenbergers towards Sir Thomas More? Did they retaliate or answer his polemics?

Bugenhagen seems to have ignored More.⁵² Joachim Camerarius called him

⁵⁰ Rogers, *More's Correspondence*, ep. 196, p. 479, 314—18; Rogers, *Selected Letters*, p. 176, n. 2.

⁵¹ Stapleton, *Life of More*, ed. Reynolds, p. 58.

⁵² There is no reference to Thomas More in Bugenhagen's published works, not even in his letters. *Dr. Johannes Bugenhagens Briefwechsel*, ed. O. Vogt for the Gesellschaft für pommersche Geschichte und Alterthumskunde (Stettin: Leon Sanier, 1888).

"vir doctrina atque dignitate praestans."⁵³ But what about Luther?

Luther did not know that William Ross was Sir Thomas More. At least there is no indication of this fact in his letters or writings. Perhaps he did not even know about More's book against him under this pseudonym. He mentioned More at least twice in his "tabletalk," the records of which need not be regarded as always reliable. The remark, as given in Henry Bell's 17th-century translation, was to the question: "*Whether Thomas More was executed for the Gospel's sake, or no?*"

Luther answered, No, in no wise; for hee was a notable Tyrant: Hee was the king's chiefest Counsellor, a very learned man and a wise man: Hee shed the blood of many innocent Christians that confessed the Gospel, those hee plagued and tormented with strange instruments like an Hangman or Executioner; First hee examined them in words under a green tree, afterwards with sharp torments in prison. At last, hee learned himself against the Edict of the King and whole Kingdom, was disobedient, and so punished.⁵⁴

⁵³ J. Camerarius, *De Vita Philippi Melanthonis Narratio*, ed. G. T. Strobel (Halle, 1777), p. 143. This writer was not able to verify Gibson, *Bibliography*, No. 221, p. 185, although he saw a copy of John Molle's *The Living Librarie* (London, 1621), B.M. press-mark 122.g.18. Hence the epigram, noted by Gibson, No. 413, p. 238, also escaped him.

⁵⁴ *Dris Martini Lutheri Colloquia Mensalia: or, Dr Martin Luther's Divine Discourses at his Table, &c.*, trans. Henrie Bell (London: William Du-Gard, 1652), p. 464. Gibson, *Bibliography*, no. 401, p. 234. Luther's denial that Sir Thomas More was a martyr for the Gospel was recorded by Anthony Lauterbach on 29 May 1538. *Luther's Works: Table Talk*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert, Helmuth Lehmann, general editor (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), XLVIII, 288, No. 3887. Luther condemned Henry VIII for

If Luther did indeed say all of this — Bell's account is embellished⁵⁵ — then this is evidence of misconceptions and wrong information about More. Likely Luther simply said that More had gone against God in opposing the Gospel, but Henry did not do justly in killing him.

Er [Henry VIII] hatt den Thomam Morum vmbbracht, qui utcunq[ue] erga Deum fuit reus, attamen erga suum regem iustus.⁵⁶

A much more reliable indication of Luther's attitude toward More is the remark he penned in 1540 that Henry wanted to be God and make articles of faith arbitrarily, condemning More and Fisher because they would not subscribe.⁵⁷ Five years after the event Luther had no kind words for More's executioner.

Melanchthon, too, condemned Henry

putting More to death. So Lauterbach again recorded it under date of 10 July 1539. *Ibid.*, XLVIII, 362, No. 4699.

⁵⁵ Bell is based on the version of Anthony Lauterbach and arranged by John Aurifaber. This is found most conveniently in *Weimar Ausgabe, Tischreden*, III, 488—89, No. 3887.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, IV, 437, No. 4699. Cf. Doernberg, p. 115, who does not give a reference.

⁵⁷ *Bekantnus des Glaubens: Die Robertus Barns / Der Heiligen Schrifft Doctor (jnn Deutschen Lande D. Antonius genent) zu Lunden jnn Engelland gethan hat. Anno M. D. xl. Am xxx. tag des Monats Julij / Da er zum Fewer one urteil vnd recht / vnschuldig / vnuerhörter sacht / gefurt vnd verbrannt worden ist. Aus der Englischen sprach verdeutscht. Mit einer Vorrhede D. Martini Luthers* (Wittenberg, 1540), Sig. A.iiij.^{2r}: "Denn was juncker Heintz wil / das sol ein Artickel des glaubens sein / beide zum leben vnd tod / Denn D. Barns sagt mir selbs alhie / Das Morus vnd der Bishoff von Roffen / auch fast darumb vom Heintzen hingerichtet seien / Das sie nicht willigen wolten jnn Heintzens Artikel / so er gestellet hatte." *Weimer Ausgabe*, LI, 449—51. Cf. Doernberg, pp. 125, 126.

VIII for the execution of More. He mentioned rumors of More's death by the end of August 1535, eight weeks after the event.⁵⁸ In the meanwhile he had dedicated the 1535 edition of his *Loci communes* to Henry.⁵⁹ At the end of that year the negotiation in Wittenberg between Henry's envoys and the Lutherans⁶⁰ found Melanchthon a bit cool;⁶¹ he had not forgotten More's death and was still affected by it.⁶² Grisar was wrong when he said that "Melanchthon took no offense at the cruel execution of Sir Thomas More. . . ." ⁶³

There is no record that Luther or Melanchthon saw the *Flugschriften* that circulated in Germany about More's death; but it is likely that they did. At least three different German translations were made of the Paris newsletter reporting it.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Melanchthon to Joachim Camerarius, 31 August 1535, *Corpus Reformatorum*, II, 918, no. 1309; L. and P., IX, 222, p. 74.

⁵⁹ *Corpus Reformatorum*, II, 920—30, No. 1311; L. and P., IX, 223, p. 74; see also L. and P., IX, 1067, p. 368.

⁶⁰ Tjernagel, pp. 135—89; Doernberg, pp. 97—120.

⁶¹ ". . . Phylippus videtur nobiscum esse, . . ." Robert Barnes to Thomas Cromwell, 28 Dec. 1535, L. and P., IX, 1030, p. 354.

⁶² "Mori causa afficior. . . ." Melanchthon to Camerarius, 24 Dec. 1535, *Corpus Reformatorum*, II, 1028, No. 1381; L. and P., IX, 1013, p. 344.

⁶³ Grisar, *Luther*, IV, 9.

⁶⁴ B. M. press-mark 187.f.5 and Ac.9925/141. The German translations were not compared with either of these French versions. For reference to the MSS in the Bibliothèque Nationale see Frank and Majie Padberg Sullivan, *Moreana, 1478—1945: A Preliminary Check List of Materials by and About Saint Thomas More* (Kansas City, Mo.: Rockhurst College, 1946).

One was printed in Nürnberg,⁶⁵ a second by Johann Faber in Freiburg/B.,⁶⁶ and a third in 1536 by Heinrich Steines in Augsburg.⁶⁷ The Freiburg translation was from the pen of G. Wickgramm (nothing more is known about him than his name). The names of the other translators are not recorded. It would be odd indeed if none of these German translations reached Wittenberg or came to the attention of Luther and Melanchthon. It is possible that the Latin version,⁶⁸ too, reached these university professors. The records say nothing.

Misunderstandings and misstatements about Luther's and Melanchthon's reactions to the executions of More and Fisher have found their way into scholarly works.⁶⁹ Luther particularly has been loaded with calumny; he, it is said, sanctioned the exe-

cution of the two Englishmen,⁷⁰ and rejoiced in their death.⁷¹ Such an interpretation totally disregards the context in which Luther's sentence was written, since he was inveighing against the greed and rapacity of the prelates of his day.⁷² His remark about More⁷³ must be taken as a condemnation of Henry VIII in the first instance. If Luther and Melanchthon rejoiced about the execution of More and Fisher, why did Henry VIII instruct Edward Fox, on a mission to Germany, to tell John Frederick, elector of Saxony, that More and Fisher were traitors? In the language of diplomacy he was to inform the Saxon court that the English king would regard it an unfriendly act if evil reports were believed.⁷⁴ The Electorate of Saxony and Wittenberg alike were shocked by the executions.

⁶⁵ *Beschreibung des vrtheyls und todtis, weiland des Gross Cantzlers in Engenlandt, Herrn Thomas Morus, Darumb das er desselben Reichs Ratschlag und neuen Statuten nit hat wöllen anhangen. Auss einem welschen truck verteutschet.* B. M. press-mark 1202.c33.(1.).

⁶⁶ *Glaubwürdiger bericht vö dem Todt des Edlen Hochgelerten Herrn Thome Mori, vnd anderer herlicher Menner in Engellandt getödtet, durch ein Epistel eynen güten freundt zügeschicht, auss Latein in Teutsch vertholmetschet.* B. M. press-mark 697.e.43.

⁶⁷ *Ein glaubwürdiger anzungung des tods Herrn Thome Mori, vnd anderer treffenlicher männer inn Engelland, geschehen im jar M. D. XXXV.* B. M. press-mark 699.g.36.

⁶⁸ *Expositio fidelis de morte D. Thomae Mori et quorundam aliorum insignium virorum in Anglia.* B. M. press-mark 4902.aaa.29. This version is probably by Phil. Montanus, not by Erasmus.

⁶⁹ Robert H. Murray, *Erasmus and Luther: Their Attitudes to Tolerance* (London: S. P. C. K., 1920), p. 274. See F. and M. P. Sullivan, *Moreana*, G-M, p. 352.

⁷⁰ Grisar, *Luther*, III, 70; *ibid.*, IV, 9; *ibid.*, V, 110; *ibid.*, VI, 246; F. and M. P. Sullivan, *Moreana*, G-M, p. 55.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 352, from Murray, p. 274.

⁷² Luther to Melanchthon (in Jena), Wittenberg, beginning of December 1535, *Dr. Martin Luther's Briefwechsel*, ed. Ernst L. Enders (Calw. & Stuttgart: Verlag von Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1903), X, 275, No. 2342, denounced rapacious and diabolical prelates, to use his terms, who were depriving the people of their goods and robbing the churches. "Would there were a few more such kings of England to put to death these cardinals. . . ." This is the remark Grisar quotes with reference in the four instances cited in footnote 70 without noting their context. There is no shred of evidence for Murray's statement, p. 352, that "his [Luther's] joy arose in part from the circumstances that the latter [Fisher] had just been created a member of the Sacred College."

⁷³ See n. 57 f.

⁷⁴ L. and P., IX, 213, p. 70, dated 31 Aug. 1535; Tjernagel, pp. 145, 146, with reference also to Richard W. Dixon, *History of the Church of England* (London, 1895), I, 296.

It is regrettable that More and Melancthon never met. They might have understood each other. In spite of More's animosity to Luther he might have treated him more kindly had he met him. Surely his *Dialogue concernynge heresies* was no

dialog in the 20th-century sense of the term. More's dealing with the Hansa merchants was arbitrary. The relationships on all sides suffered from a lack of adequate, accurate information.

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