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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, writers about the relationships between Henry VIII and Martin Luther, one biographer of Luther, and a few scholars about the 16th century have told in some detail the story about the relations between More and Luther. Only Sister Gertrude Donnelly investigated these relations comprehensively. 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. No writer seems to have noticed, or at least has not thought it worthwhile mentioning, that More never wrote against the Wittenberg humanist, Philipp Melanchthon. The present investigation is an attempt to summarize the relations between Thomas More and the Wittenberg Lutherans, not, however, including More's attacks against

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his compatriots 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-


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


\(^9\) See references in n. 2 above.


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


vorable reference to Erasmus and an unfavorable reference to Wyclif, Hus, Helvidius, Arius, Montanus, and all the pestilent Lutherans 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. 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. He did not mention Melanchthon.

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. It was reprinted in 1526 with a response from John Cochlaeus, 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. 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-

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14 Ross, fol. H. 17v.
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:
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.
20 A compendious letter which John Pomeron curate of the congregation at Wittenberge sent to the faithfull christian congregation in Englands (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. Melanchthon 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 our righteousness." 25 He included an exhortation to do good 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

21 Doctissima D. Thomae Mori Clarissimi ac Disertissi. Viri Epistola, in qua non minus facete quam piæ, respondet Literis Ioannis Pom­

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. Aiii.

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 Stahlhofskaufleute und Luthers Schriften," Hanische Geschichtsblatter (Leip­zig: Verlag von Duncker & Humbolt, 1874), I, 155—62; idem, "Das Verfahren wider die Stahlhofskaufleute wegen der Lutherbücher," ibid. (1878), pp. 157—72.

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. On 11 February 1526 four merchants had to carry faggots in penance, while Lutheran books were being burned at St. Paul's Cathedral.

More's activities against the Hansa merchants go beyond the mere forbidding of the importation of Lutheran books into England. 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 Testament.


29 B.M., press-mark C.18.e.1.(94.).


31 Sydney Lee, "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.
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. 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 heresyes*. 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." 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. . . ." He contrasted Cyprian, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Basil, Chrysostom, and Gregory with "frere Luther & his wyfe, prieeste Pomerane & his wife, frere Huiskin & his wife, priest Carlastadius and his wyfe, Dan Ortho monke & his wyfe, frere Lambert & his wife, frantike Colins, & more frantike Tindall." 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.

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, 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" is in strong contrast to his earlier bitter-


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.

ness. He still did not favor the Lutheran disparagement of fasting and “other bodily afflictions” as works meriting salvation. Lutheran 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.” 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. 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. The references More made to Melanchthon in one of his letters to Erasmus can be described only as objective, entirely neutral in their reporting. More received a report from Cochlaeus about Melanchthon’s stand at Augsburg and the *Confessio Augustana* delivered to Emperor Charles V (1530), 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 open­door policy toward these newfangled sects,” More wrote Erasmus in explaining that he was on his guard against Grynaeus. 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. He referred

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40 Ibid., p. 38, n. 5; p. xxxvi.
41 Ibid., pp. 77—81 (Part II, 6).
42 Ibid., pp. 81—82 (Part II, 7).
44 See n. 19 above. Sig. B.17.
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.
also to his associations with John Harris, More's secretary and John's tutor. 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.

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. Joachim Camerarius called him...

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50 Rogers, More's Correspondence, ep.196, p. 479, 314–18; Rogers, Selected Letters, p. 176, n. 2.
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 pommerische Geschichte und Alterthumskunde (Stettin: Leon Sanier, 1888).
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 Moll'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 embellished — 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 utcunque 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.

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.


One was printed in Nürnberg, a second by Johann Faber in Freiburg/B., and a third in 1536 by Heinrich Steines in Augsburg. 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, 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. Luther particularly has been loaded with calumny; he, it is said, sanctioned the execution of the two Englishmen, and rejoiced in their death. 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. His remark about More 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. The Electorate of Saxony and Wittenberg alike were shocked by the executions.

66 Glaubwirdiger bericht vo dem Todt des Edlen Hochgelerten Herrn Tbome Mori, vnd anderer herlicber Memzer in Engellandt getodtet, dttrch ein Epistel eynen giiten freundt zugeschicht, auss Latein in Teutsch vertbolmetschet. B. M. press-mark 697.e.43.
67 Ein glaubwirdiger anzyangung des tods Herrn Thome Mori, vnd anderer treffenlicher männer inn Engellandt, 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.
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.
It is regrettable that More and Melanchthon 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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