

# Luther's Legacy to the English Reformation

GERALD BRAY

## **Introduction**

I would like to begin with two well-known assumptions, one of which is largely true, and the other of which is almost entirely false. The first statement is that the Church of England is not a Lutheran Church. Although it broke with Rome during Luther's lifetime and before the birth of Calvinism the English Church demonstrated a theological independence from Lutheranism, with which it was not to be reconciled until the twentieth century. The second statement is that Henry VIII leaned towards Luther because he wanted a divorce, and the Wittenberg Reformer offered him a way of escape from the constraints of traditional Catholic morality and Canon Law. I think it can be said without exaggeration that most intelligent laypeople would assent to both of these assertions, if only because both have long been thought to be matters of so-called general knowledge.

Now in actual fact, the first of these statements can be regarded as more or less true. The Church of England is not Lutheran in the way that the churches of Scandinavia are, nor have relations between the two communions always been smooth. The recent conclusion of the Porvoo and Meissen talks, as well as discussions between Episcopalians and Lutherans in the USA, have produced a remarkably deep measure of intercommunion between the two traditions, but commentators on them have also highlighted the fact that there have been times when relations were much less friendly than they are now. For much of the seventeenth century, for example, Lutherans regarded Anglicans as Calvinists and looked down on them accordingly, while in the nineteenth century it was the turn of Anglo-Catholics to despise Lutherans as mere

Protestants. To say that both of these reactions owe as much to ignorance as to anything else merely underlies the fact that Anglicans and Lutherans have not been moving in the same intellectual or spiritual universe for most of the past 400 years.

The second statement however, is almost wholly false. Quite apart from the fact that Henry VIII was not seeking a divorce but an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragón, there is no evidence whatever to suggest that Luther in any way approved of this or supported it. On the contrary, all that we know indicates that Henry's wishes were a barrier to closer co-operation between him and the Lutherans, most of whom thought that the Queen had a strong case. Luther is on record as having said that, even if it was true that the marriage had been contracted somewhat irregularly in the first place, that did not justify annulling it. After all, the Wittenberg doctor pointed out, many marriages begin in irregular circumstances, but cannot simply be dissolved on that account!

The truth is that Luther and Henry VIII were not natural allies, and had Anglo-German co-operation been entirely up to them, it would almost certainly not have taken place. They were temperamentally incompatible for a start, but more significantly, they were poles apart theologically. If there is any way in which Henry VIII could be called a reformer, it would be in the Erasmian sense. Humanist culture (including biblical scholarship of the Erasmian type) and theological learning appealed to him, and he was himself reasonably accomplished at both. But in terms of doctrine, ceremonial and general outlook, Henry VIII was a traditionalist Catholic, a theological position from which he never deviated. On the question of his annulment, he believed that he was a better theologian and

canonist than the Pope was, and there have been those, then as now, who have thought that he was right. But he was in no way a Protestant or a Lutheran, and never became one in anything but the most technical of senses. In modern terms he might be considered to have been an Old Catholic, but no more than that.

Henry's antipathy towards Luther, which was fully reciprocated, can be traced back to 1520, when the king sat down to write his *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments*, a diatribe against the German reformer which earned him the title *Defender of the Faith* from a grateful Pope. Nothing could be more ironic than the fact that most people today believe that the sovereign bears this title now in her capacity as Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and that it is therefore an obvious indication of Britain's Protestant heritage, whereas in reality it is a residual reminder of Henry VIII's vituperous anti-Protestantism! Luther replied to Henry's diatribe in kind, and for most of the 1520s, the hostility between Wittenberg and England was as great as that between Wittenberg and Rome.

Changing circumstances after 1529 caused both men to regret their earlier outbursts, but this was a diplomatic repentance only. The history of the non-papal Church of England between 1534 and the king's death in 1547 shows clearly that whenever the king took a hand in religious affairs the effect was to resist the influence of Luther and his followers, not to promote it. There were men in Henry's entourage who were pro-Lutheran and who used the opportunities they had to further the spread of Luther's ideas in England, but this was always on royal sufferance, and when the king's conservative views were well-known, the English theologians whose task it was to negotiate with the Germans could do nothing.

Clerical celibacy was a case in point. Henry VIII was in favour of it, and however much the Germans argued the other way, they could achieve nothing. The English ambassadors to Wittenberg in 1535–1536 apparently would not even discuss the subject, not because they were themselves unsympathetic to Luther's views, but because they realized that there was no point in their doing so. It would not be until the following reign, after Luther's death, that any progress would be made on this issue, or on anything else which conflicted with Henry's idea of what constituted proper church doctrine and discipline.

### ***The Scholar-Theologians***

From what I have said so far, it will be apparent that Lutheran influence in sixteenth-century England owed virtually nothing to Henry VIII. The men who acted as conduits of Reformation thought were theologians

who had been trained in Erasmian humanism and who were attracted to Luther's ideas on their merits, rather than because they saw any political gain to be had from them. The leading names are those of William Tyndale, John Frith and Robert Barnes, each of whom has received careful individual treatment in a recent book by Dr Carl Trueman of the University of Nottingham.<sup>1</sup> Of these three only Tyndale can claim to be widely known today, and for that a good deal of the credit must go to Dr David Daniell, Professor Emeritus of University College, London, whose editions of Tyndale's biblical translations and recent biography of Tyndale<sup>2</sup> have given the latter an entirely new profile in the mind of the educated public.

It must however be remembered that Tyndale left England in 1524, after his plans for an English Bible had been rebuffed by Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall of London. When his English new Testament appeared in 1526 he became an outlaw in his native land, where the Constitutions of the Convocation of Canterbury, held at Oxford in 1407, had made translation of the Bible into English an act of heresy, punishable under a writ of 1401 (*De haeretico comburendo*) by burning at the stake. Tyndale was still alive when England broke with the Papacy in 1534, and when his arch-enemy Sir Thomas More was executed the following year. But he was never rehabilitated during his lifetime, and his name remained proscribed for about a generation after his death in 1536. John Frith was arrested, tried, imprisoned and executed in 1532–33, just before England finally broke with the Papacy, so that he had little impact on events either.

The only one of the three to exert any influence after the break with Rome was Robert Barnes, who had managed to escape to Wittenberg sometime in 1529 or 1530, and who did not return to England until August 1534, when he appeared as ambassador for the German cities of Hamburg and Lübeck. This brought him to the notice of the king at just the right moment, and in July 1535 he was appointed Royal Chaplain, which was not bad going for someone who had only recently graduated in theology from the University of Wittenberg! From then until 1539 he had considerable influence at court, and most of the diplomatic approaches to the Lutherans during this time were associated with him. He fell from grace, along with Thomas Cromwell, over Henry's disastrous marriage to Anne of Cleves, and the almost simultaneous passing of the theologically reactionary Act of Six Articles in 1539 created a climate which was hostile to his Lutheran convictions. He was arrested for making a vitriolic attack on Bishop Stephen Gardiner, and after being tried for heresy, he was burnt at the stake on 30 July 1540—along with three Catholics!

Both Tyndale and Barnes studied under Luther and Melancthon at Wittenberg, and along with Frith and

others, they were responsible for translating and disseminating a wide range of Lutheran books and tracts in England. How Lutheran they were themselves though, is a matter of conjecture. Because Lutheranism was long defined mainly in terms of Luther's eucharistic doctrine, which only Barnes held, it has traditionally been assumed that only he has any serious claim to the designation. More recently, research by Dr Trueman and others has revealed a more complex picture, according to which John Frith seems to have had a clearer understanding of Luther's theology than did the other two, but in which none of the three can be said to be Lutheran in the strict sense of the term. Dr Trueman is worth quoting on this point:

The extent to which each followed Luther is a complex question . . . All three accepted justification by faith as fundamental. However, Frith was the only one who, in his doctrine of the two purgatories,<sup>3</sup> came close to developing a Lutheran doctrine of the cross. He was also the only one to develop a clear doctrine of the atonement based upon God's righteous wrath against sin. Barne's position on the atonement was vague, while Tyndale tended to focus upon the work of Christ as the means of freeing man's will rather than as the means of dealing with his moral guilt. Barnes was the only one to develop a doctrine of double predestination. He was also alone in his statement of the Lutheran idea of imputation, although this concept does not play a significant role in his theology. However, in arguing for the bondage of man's will, Barnes did not use the argument from God's immutability, which was axiomatic to Luther's own position. Furthermore, all three men allowed the law a more positive role in the Christian life than did Luther. Indeed, when looked at in these terms, the English Reformers, in their interpretation of Luther, can be said to be as remarkable for what they altered or omitted as for what they wholeheartedly adopted.<sup>4</sup>

This independent attitude towards Luther can perhaps most easily be seen in Tyndale's translations of Scripture. Dr Daniell has given us a number of examples<sup>5</sup> where Tyndale quite clearly followed Luther's renderings, and his marginal notes reveal a fairly strong, though by no means overwhelming, dependence on his teacher.<sup>6</sup> But it is also clear that Tyndale was a better scholar and linguist than Luther was, and that he did not hesitate to prefer English renderings which were closer to the original Greek or Hebrew texts than Luther's German was. There are also a number of places where Tyndale could have followed Luther, but apparently chose not to do so for stylistic reasons. Translation, of course, is an idiosyncratic art, and it is not always possible to make direct comparisons from

one language to another. More significant in this respect is what Tyndale did to Luther's Prologue (*Vorrede*) to the New Testament.<sup>7</sup> He doubled its length, for a start, and greatly expanded Luther's Pauline theology. Nearly half of Tyndale's version is taken up with a discourse on human depravity, which follows Luther's theology but is not in his text.

Tyndale did not print his adaptation of Luther as a preface to the New Testament, but as a separate work, *The Pathway to Holy Scripture*, which appeared in 1531 and may justly be regarded as the first work of biblical hermeneutics in the English language. Incidentally, as Professor Daniell is keen to point out, there is no sign in Tyndale of Luther's tendency to relegate Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation to a kind of secondary status within the Canon. Here, as elsewhere, Tyndale stops short of Luther's radicalism and confines himself to expounding Luther's principles within the structures inherited from catholic Christendom. In this respect, he was paradigmatic and typical of the English Reformation generally, which may be regarded as the classic case of putting new wine in old wineskins—an exercise which as we know was to have the predictable (and evangelical!) effect of splitting the wineskins in Elizabethan and Early Stuart times (cf. Mt. 9:17).

In trying to assess the extent to which men like Tyndale, Frith and Barnes can be said to have introduced Lutheranism into England, there are, I think two important factors which must be taken into account. The first is that in the 1520s, Lutheranism was still rather undefined. Luther's own views were not fixed, and although there were certain basic principles, like justification by faith alone, which would remain firm, there were other doctrines, notably double predestination, which would undergo a series of modifications at the hands of Melanchthon and others, and would soon come to seem less characteristic of Lutheranism than they had been of Luther himself. Not until the publication of the Augsburg Confession in 1530 could a definable Lutheranism be said to have come into existence, and it is not an accident that the second phase of Lutheran influence in England was intimately connected with that Confession.

The second factor is that the English reformers of the 1520s were translators and conduits for Lutheran books, as much as they were innovators, so that what they themselves thought was perhaps less important than what they were prepared to translate and/or circulate. The true extent of Lutheran influence in England around 1530 can be properly gauged only if we take the censorship into consideration. Although Lutheran books were being seized and burned as early as 1520, by 1530 it was possible for an educated but relatively humble cleric to possess a considerable Lutheran library. We know this from the testimony of John Foxe, who records the extensive collection of

Richard Bayfield, a fairly obscure cleric who was burned for Lutheranism on 20 November 1531. At his trial, Bayfield claimed that he had imported the books around Easter (9 April) 1531, which is when they were seized.

Interesting confirmation of this is provided by the Canons of the Convocation of 1529, which have been strangely neglected by modern research. These Canons appear to have been composed at or shortly after the final session of the Convocation, which closed on 27 March 1531, just under a fortnight before Easter. Canon 6 contains the longest known list of heretical books which were condemned in England at this time, and if Foxe's list is accurate, the substance of them seems to have belonged to, and probably came from, Bayfield's library. The list as given in the canons contains seven works by Luther, including his Commentary on Galatians, three books of John Oecolampadius, one work of Zwingli, three books by Johannes Bugenhagen, seven works of Francois Lambert, four books by Philipp Melancthon, two commentaries by Christopher Hegendorff, three commentaries by Johannes Brenz, a commentary by Andreas Althamer, Martin Bucer on the Psalms and on the Four Gospels, Justus Jonas on the Acts of the Apostles, Wolfgang Capito on Hosea and Habakkuk, plus a large number of anonymous writings, works by Englishmen abroad (especially Tyndale), and even a copy of the Augsburg Confession.

That a library as vast and as varied as that could be found in England at this time indicates that Lutheran ideas were much more widespread than is often thought, and that they had penetrated beyond the rarefied humanist circles of the court and the universities. Furthermore, it indicates quite clearly that the full range of contemporary Lutheranism, including Bucer and even Zwingli, (who was probably not distinguished from the rest by the English censors), was readily available in London, and was felt to be sufficiently important to merit detailed condemnation by the church authorities. Intellectually speaking, a Lutheran invasion was underway, and when the break with Rome came in 1534, publication in England of these previously banned works suddenly increased. By the end of the decade there was a large and growing body of Lutheran writings readily available to the reading public, and it would be strange indeed if the effects of this had not rubbed off on the newly-independent Church.

### **Confessional Lutheranism**

The possibility that England and the Lutherans in Germany might forge an alliance against the Pope and the Emperor Charles V was already much in the air

when Henry VIII finally had himself proclaimed Supreme Head in Earth of the Church of England in 1534. Charles V, it will be remembered, was Catherine of Aragón's nephew, to whom she had appealed in her efforts to prevent the annulment of her marriage, and as Holy Roman Emperor, he was also a major obstacle to the spread of Lutheranism in Germany. As so often happens, it was what they were against that united the two sides more than what they were for, and this fundamental flaw would ultimately prevent any lasting alliance between the German Lutherans and Henry VIII. Luther was just as strong a supporter of Catherine of Aragón as Charles V was, even to the point of suggesting that bigamy was a possible way of resolving Henry's need for a credible male successor!

But at the end of 1534 it must have seemed that common interest in an alliance was stronger than these residual differences. Catherine had been put away and there was a new Queen, with every prospect of a male heir to come. Many of the Lutheran princes, aware of England's military strength and basically sympathetic to Henry's dynastic difficulty, were inclined to try to persuade the theologians to overlook the past and get on with a future agreement. They wanted, and in the so-called Christmas Articles of 1535 they offered Henry the presidency<sup>8</sup> of the Schmalkaldic League, in return for a subsidy from England. But as the Christmas Articles show and as subsequent discussions both in Germany and in England were to confirm, the heart of the matter was theological. Doctrinal unity, not political convenience, would be the true foundation of any lasting alliance between Henry VIII and the Lutherans, and in 1535 this meant that the Church of England would be expected to accept the Augsburg Confession and Melancthon's *Apology* for it.

The second stage of the Lutheran penetration of England may thus be regarded as essentially confessional—to what extent would the English divines in charge of implementing the King's Reformation be willing or able to oblige the Lutherans on this point? It may be remarked in passing that the Christmas Articles allowed for changes to the Augsburg Confession to be made by mutual consent, and also for a General Council of the Church to settle its doctrine. But the way to these desirable goals was through the Augsburg Confession, not above, beyond or around it. The Confession was already known in England, as we have already seen, but there had never been much discussion of its contents nor had the question of subscription to it ever been raised. If the exact opinion of someone like Robert Barnes was hard to pin down, one can imagine what the situation must have been in the case of the rest of the clerical establishment. A conservative like Stephen Gardiner would have nothing to do with it, even though he sided with the Lutherans on the question of the royal supremacy. Others

were more amenable to discussion, but it is very doubtful whether anyone in England would have agreed to subscribe to a document which they had had no part in composing, however true to the Word of God it might be. After all, the English had just rejected one foreign ecclesiastical jurisdiction—they were hardly about to surrender to another!

The Lutherans soon realized this, and instead of trying to impose the Augsburg Confession as it stood, sought to come to a broader agreement which would incorporate most of the substance of the Augsburg Confession but give the appearance of being the fruit of genuine negotiation between the two parties. The result was the so-called Wittenberg Articles, which were drafted (probably by Melancthon) and signed in April 1536. Given their obvious historical importance, the Wittenberg Articles must be considered to be among the greatest lost documents in English history. The English delegates brought them home for the King to ponder, but they were never heard of again, and to this day no copy of them has been found in England. Even in Germany they were a rarity and were soon lost from view, only to be rediscovered and pieced together by Georg Mentz from incomplete Latin and German versions, and this as recently as 1905.<sup>9</sup> Since then they have more or less been lost from sight again. Mentz's edition is virtually unobtainable in England, and they are seldom even mentioned in scholarly studies of the period.<sup>10</sup>

This is a great pity, because the Wittenberg Articles are the bridge between the Augsburg Confession and the Ten Articles of 1536, which are the first confessional statement of the independent Church of England.

It is impossible within the confines of a paper like this to do justice to the many links which there are between the Wittenberg Articles and the Augsburg Confession, on the one hand, and later Anglican formularies on the other.<sup>11</sup> But to give you an idea of what they are like, we may quote the short but important Article 6, concerning the Lord's Supper. This reads:

Concerning the tenth Article of our Confession, we **firmly believe and teach that in the sacrament of the Lord's body and blood, Christ's body and blood are truly, substantially and really present under the species of bread and wine, and that under the same species they are truly and bodily presented and distributed to all those who receive the sacrament.**

Comparison with the tenth Article of the Augsburg Confession shows that the Wittenberg Article, short though it is, is nevertheless a considerable development of its prototype. The 1530 statement reads as follows:

Of the Supper of the Lord, they teach that the body and blood of Christ are truly present (*vere adsint*) and are communicated to those that eat in the Lord's Supper. And they disapprove of those that teach otherwise.

It is immediately apparent from these two texts that the Wittenberg Articles are a much fuller statement of what we have come to regard as traditional Lutheranism. Where the Augsburg Confession confines itself to saying that the body and blood of Christ are *truly* present, without saying how this is so or even where they are, the Wittenberg Articles are much more detailed. They include the controversial term *substantially*, and use the classic formula of the real presence, though the word transubstantiation itself is avoided. This formulation of the matter was to reappear in Article 4 of the Ten Articles of 1536 and in Article 7 of the Thirteen Articles of 1538, both of which must be regarded as basically the work of Archbishop Cranmer. It allowed for the continued acceptance of the traditional doctrine, dear to Henry VIII, but did not commit the Church of England irrevocably to it. On the other hand, there is no sign of the receptionism which was so characteristic of Cranmer's later period.

The position adopted in the Wittenberg Articles clearly owed a great deal to Melancthon, and later Lutheranism would probably have been uncomfortable with its use of the term *substantially*, which is ambiguous. But in 1536, it is quite likely that Cranmer saw in Melancthon's careful formulation of the issue, a way out of a peculiarly English dilemma. On the one hand, he could upset the King or the conservatives on the episcopal bench. For them, transubstantiation was a major article of faith and they would never have abandoned it simply because of a jurisdictional quarrel with the Pope. At the same time, Cranmer was sensitive to the charge of idolatry which Protestant voices were raising against the Mass, and with which he undoubtedly agreed to a large extent. Melancthon's formula, which we have come to call *consubstantiation*, must have seemed like a workable compromise in the circumstances. The real presence of Christ in the sacrament was clearly affirmed, but any statement to the effect that the bread and wine were miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Christ was carefully avoided.

The precise nature of Christ's presence was left only half stated. Everyone, except perhaps a Zwinglian, would agree that the real presence of Christ in the sacrament was essentially spiritual. What was left unstated was the relationship of the spiritual to the material. Now that most of us are so ultra-Zwinglian in practice that even the idea of such a relationship smacks of idolatry, we are shocked to think that Cranmer could ever have followed Melancthon and

expressed himself in this apparently 'Romish' way. But if we take ourselves back to 1536, and remember that in the controversies of the time, anyone who did not reaffirm transubstantiation in a clear and unambiguous manner would have seemed to be suspect at best, and heretical at worst, we can see the matter in a different light. Far from being a reaffirmation of traditional Roman teaching, the Wittenberg Articles are a first step away from it, and represent an acceptance of Lutheranism by the English delegates. The incorporation of the phrase into the Ten Articles of 1536, a purely English document, made the Church of England a Lutheran body—at least on this point. Transubstantiation was reaffirmed, it is true, in the Act of Six Articles of 1539, but that was the point at which Henry VIII started to backtrack from his earlier overtures to the Lutherans. It does not diminish the fact that by that time, opposition to Rome in England had become positively identified with Lutheranism in a broad, but fundamental sense.

We have got rather ahead of ourselves here, and it is necessary to go back over developments in England after the return of the delegates from Wittenberg. Why the Wittenberg Articles disappeared is not known, but, as we have seen, some of them provided a basis for the Ten Articles which were published shortly afterwards. Lutheran influence on these is both formal and substantial. It is formal, in the sense that like the Augsburg Confession, the Ten Articles are divided into two sections, one of which is doctrinal and the other of which concentrates on rites and ceremonies. The substantial link is less obvious, though it can be seen in the first half of the Ten Articles quite clearly. Article 5 on Justification is pure Lutheranism, and the restriction of the number of sacraments to three—baptism, penance and holy communion—also reflects contemporary Lutheran belief. At the same time, the Ten Articles are an independent document, drawing on Lutheran sources but not so dependent on them as to attract the label *Made in Germany*.

Once the Ten Articles were in place, Cranmer embarked on more ambitious projects. Very shortly afterwards, he sponsored the publication of the so-called Bishop's Book, which was a Protestantizing commentary on the Ten Articles, bringing out affinities with Luther which were not immediately apparent in the text. Even before this came out, Thomas Cromwell, the Lord Chancellor and an ardent partisan of reform in both church and state, had issued a set of Injunctions which was designed to implement the Ten Articles at parochial level. Beyond demanding that the parish clergy read and instruct their people in the Articles, the salient features of the Injunctions were the suppression of 'superstition', which included a whole host of traditional devotional practices, and the encouragement of learning. Parishioners were expect-

ted to memorize the rudiments of the Christian Faith, so as to be able to participate more fully in worship, and parishes were asked to provide funds for the proper education of future clergy. Both of these measures were clearly Lutheran, and the second, in particular, occupied a major place in the Wittenberg Articles. It was even provided at Wittenberg that women should receive theological training along with men, if not alongside them—an idea which was not to resurface until the nineteenth century, and was not to be fully accepted until our own time.

Cranmer's most ambitious project, however, was the composition of a Confession of Faith. He must have realized that the Augsburg Confession was the benchmark of Protestantism in Germany, and that the relationship of the Church of England to this Protestantism would have to be codified in a confession of faith which clearly stated what the English Church believed on the matters which had divided Luther from Rome. Cranmer evidently took the Augsburg Confession as it stood, and proceeded to modify it for English use. It appears that he never got beyond Article 17 of the Augsburg Confession, though we cannot be sure why. The most likely explanation is that he was forced to interrupt his work by the King's change of policy, and that it got put away among his papers, from which it did not re-emerge until the 1830s. Published as the Thirteen Articles, this document is the closest thing to a Lutheran Confession ever produced by an English churchman of any standing.

The first three of these Articles are an almost verbatim repetition of the Augsburg Confession, which proves beyond any doubt that Cranmer was using them as his model. The fourth and fifth Augsburg Articles, on justification, are combined into a single Article by Cranmer, and amplified. This is almost certainly a reflection of developing Lutheran doctrine, rather than a departure from or modification of it. Cranmer's fifth Article combines Augsburg's seventh and eighth Articles on the church and its purity. His sixth, seventh and eighth Articles take up Augsburg's ninth, tenth and twelfth Articles, dealing respectively with the sacraments of baptism, the eucharist and penance once more. Cranmer's ninth and subsequent Articles take up the themes of Augsburg's thirteenth to seventeenth Articles, viz. the use of the sacraments, the ministers of the church, the rites of the church, civil affairs, and the last things.

The substance of these Articles reveals a much freer adaptation of the Augsburg Confession than was apparent at the start, and there is no doubt that the peculiarities of the English situation must be regarded as at least partly responsible for this. Nevertheless, the point by point correspondence with the Augsburg Confession is most remarkable, and demonstrates

beyond any reasonable doubt that by this time Cranmer was firmly in the Lutheran camp. So much so in fact, that one of the main points of interest in the Thirteen Articles is what they *omit*. For if we gloss over everything after Article 17, it is still true that Cranmer did not pick up either Article 6 or Article 11 of the Augsburg Confession. Article 11 is a short statement regarding auricular confession, which the Lutherans had retained among the sacraments, but which Cranmer dropped, probably following evolving Lutheran practice. It is significant in this connection that the continued use of auricular confession is the sixth of the Six Articles enjoined by statute in 1539—the omission had obviously not gone unnoticed!

Article 6 is another matter. This deals with the vitally important subject of the necessity of good works as the fruit of justification. Luther and his followers have often been accused of neglecting this, and statements like Luther's famous '*Sin boldly*', which he wrote in a letter to Melancthon, have been wrested from their context and made to support the bizarre notion that Luther was an antinomian in ethical matters. This is obviously untrue, but the charge was made in his own lifetime, and it was a point on which the Reformers were sensitive, given that the Roman Church had long portrayed heresy and debauchery as two sides of the same coin. So why did Cranmer omit it? He can hardly have disagreed with the sentiment it expressed, since he was certainly no antinomian either!

Arguments from silence are always dangerous, but perhaps the best answer lies in the probability that inclusion of this Article, in whatever form, would have been perceived in England as a retreat into traditional Catholicism. Other documents of the period make it abundantly clear that the term *good works* was almost inextricably bound up at this time with pious practices, which were the very essence of the kind of Pharisaism which Cranmer was so determined to uproot. In this respect, we may perhaps compare the way in which the word *charity* has come to be associated in the English mind with *almsgiving*, a form of hypocrisy which can be traced right back to the practice of Corban, which Jesus so vigorously condemned in Mark 7:9–13. Just as we would now hesitate to say that *charity* is the greatest of the virtues, because of the misunderstandings which might ensue, so it seems that Cranmer did not want to be seen to approve of good works, however, much he understood and agreed with the substance of what the Augsburg Confession was trying to affirm. The fact that the Act of Six Articles felt it necessary to underline the necessity of such good works as celibacy and private masses puts this kind of reluctance into proper perspective!

### ***The Strange Death of Lutheran England***

What Cranmer would have done with his Thirteen Articles, had he ever managed to complete and publish them, must remain a matter for speculation. However, it is surely not too much to suppose that he would have wished them to have been accepted by the Convocations, and possibly even ratified by Parliamentary Statute. This at least, was the route which he chose later on, when he composed his Forty-two Articles (1553), even if he was unable to bring the matter to a successful conclusion, owing to the sudden death of King Edward VI and the subsequent reversal of the Reformation by Mary Tudor.

That the Thirteen Articles never became the official confession of the Church of England was almost certainly due to the change in ecclesiastical policy initiated by Henry VIII in 1539. There were a number of reasons for this, which range from the threat of an alliance between Charles V and the King of France against a supposedly heretical England, to the natural reaction of conservatives like Bishop Stephen Gardiner and the Duke of Norfolk, who resented what they perceived as creeping Lutheranism and worse. For by 1539 Zwinglian ideas were circulating freely in England, and even the Anabaptists had made their appearance. The true impact of these should not be exaggerated, but given the pace of change during the 1530s, who could be sure that a further radicalization was not in the offing? Add to that the disaster of Henry's proposed marriage to Anne of Cleves, which had been organized by Thomas Cromwell and Robert Barnes, the great proponents of Lutheran reform, and the climate was especially propitious for theological reaction.

Parliament convened on 28 April 1539 to debate what was to be done to achieve unity in religion, as the phrase went, and for a time it seemed that a compromise would be worked out. Every view on the matter was heard by a commission appointed for the purpose by the House of Lords, but as often happens in such cases, the result was a stalemate. On 16 May 1539 the Duke of Norfolk sought to break the deadlock by drawing up a list of six questions for debate. Each of these represented doctrines or practices on which Henry VIII and the Lutherans showed the widest divergence of opinion. Cranmer and five other bishops argued loud and long for the Lutheran position on each of the matters concerned, but the Duke knew the King's mind, and the bishops were overruled. In the end all but Shaxton of Salisbury submitted to the King's will, and the Act of Six Articles was passed by Parliament, taking effect on 28 June 1539. Shaxton and Hugh Latimer thereupon resigned their bishop-

rics, and in Germany the Lutherans virtually broke off relations with England altogether.

There is some indication that Henry VIII did not fully realize what a storm his Act would cause, and there were attempts by a number of people, notably Martin Bucer, to restore good relations. But the execution of both Cromwell and Barnes within a year of the passage of the Act and the persecution of Protestant dissidents—about 200 were rounded up in London in 1540 alone—ensured that nothing would come of these. As time went on, it became apparent that Gardiner's party was in the ascendant. Publication of the Great Bible, the English translation of the Scriptures which Henry VIII had authorized in 1538, was stopped at the end of 1541, though the Bible itself was not withdrawn from the churches. In 1543 the Bishop's Book was replaced by what has come to be known as the King's Book, a much more traditional exposition of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed. Its general tone can be gauged from the fact that it was reprinted in the nineteenth century by a group of Anglo-Catholics who saw it as one of the clearest signs that the Henrician Reformation was not Protestant in any doctrinal sense!

Henry's reaction, as this period has come to be known, did not end until after his death on 28 January 1547. By that time Luther had died, the Roman Church had inaugurated what we know as the Counter Reformation, the Lutherans had been defeated in war against Charles V and divisions had appeared in the Schmalkaldic League. At the same time, it was becoming apparent that a new star was rising on the Protestant horizon, that of John Calvin, whose career at Geneva was just beginning to take off. Thus when Cranmer finally found the freedom to introduce the Reformation he desired, the political and theological scene had shifted to such an extent that it is no longer possible to speak of a Lutheran Reformation in England. In its classical form, the English Reformation would be mildly Calvinist—always independent to some degree of any Continental model, but nevertheless reflecting the interests and concerns of Geneva more faithfully than those of Wittenberg. Proof of this is not far to seek. Article 29 of the Forty-two Articles of 1553 (which appears in a revised form as Article 28 of the Thirty-nine Articles of 1563/1571) abandons both the language and the approach to the eucharistic elements which Cranmer faithfully reproduced in the Thirteen Articles of 1538.

Most indicative of all is a little-known passage which Cranmer included in 1553 but which was deleted ten years later, when his text was revised. It reads:

Forasmuch as the truth of man's nature requireth, that the body of one and the selfsame man cannot be at one time in diverse places, but must needs be in one

certain place; therefore the body of Christ cannot be present at one time in many and diverse places. And because, as Holy Scripture doth teach, Christ was taken up into Heaven, and there shall continue until the end of the world, a faithful man ought not either to believe or openly to confess the real and bodily presence, as they term it, of Christ's flesh and blood, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Denial of the ubiquity of Christ's body, as much as the abandonment of the language of the real presence, demonstrates as nothing else can, how far Cranmer and England with him, had moved out of the Lutheran orbit by this time. Within a few years, Lutheran theologians would be bracketing the Church of England with the other Reformed Churches on the Continent, and condemning them both for heresy. Happily, we have come far beyond that now, and the turns of recent history have brought Anglicans closer to the Lutherans once more, but that is another story, whose ultimate outcome remains unpredictable.

As we draw our account to a close, what can we say about the legacy of Luther and Lutheranism to the historic Anglican identity? It seems to me that the following points can be made. First, and most important, there is the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This was adopted by the Church of England as early as 1536, and it has remained both constant and central to Anglican formularies ever since. The Lutheran provenance of this doctrine has never been seriously challenged, even by those like John Henry Newman, who have done their utmost to demonstrate that the Church of England was never a Protestant Church!

Second, there is the place given to the vernacular Scriptures. William Tyndale was a disciple of Luther, and no-one can doubt that he got the bulk of his inspiration from Wittenberg, where he had actually studied himself. The fact that Tyndale was not a slavish imitator of Luther does not detract from the enormity of the debt which he owed the German Reformer, and which has left an indelible mark on English spirituality ever since. The vernacular Bible was the one thing which Henry VIII could not take away, even if he had wanted to do so, and the biblical character of Anglicanism must be regarded as one of the most important aspects of its Lutheran heritage.

Third, there is the emphasis on learning, which has characterized Anglicanism at its best. England is the only country in Europe which has a tradition of biblical studies to rival that of Germany and credit for this must go to those scholars and divines who from the beginning emphasized the importance of humanistic studies for the development of religion. Of course, this influence was (and is) wider than Luther, but the fact that it has been tied to the church, rather than regarded as a

rival to it, owes more than a little to the great Reformer's convictions. Scholarship in the service of practical piety—that is the formula which has the authentic Lutheran ring to it, and which has always characterized Anglicanism at its best.

Fourth, and closely linked to this, there is the emphasis on the importance of a learned ministry. This appeared as early as the Wittenberg Articles of 1536, which contain an elaborate scheme for theological education, and this has remained a goal of the Anglican Church ever since. We have to confess, I think, that the Lutherans have been more successful in attaining this goal than we have, and I would even go so far as to say that the threatened loss of this tradition at the present time is perhaps the most worrying aspect of the current malaise in Anglican life, but the fact that this can be felt is in no small measure due to the Doctor of Wittenberg, who held out both in his teaching and in his example, a model for ministry very different from that which had gone before, and which in the end was to create a Protestant ethos quite clearly distinct from that of Rome.

We in England owe a greater debt to Luther and his followers than we perhaps realize. As Anglicans and Lutherans begin to grow closer once again, we should pray that these fundamental aspects of our historic relationship may come to the centre of the theological agenda, so that both sides in the dialogue may be refreshed, renewed and reunited in the grandeur of the vision bequeathed to us by Martin Luther, that servant of Christ whom God was pleased to use so mightily for the upbuilding and extension of his church.

### Footnotes

1. C.R. Trueman, *Luther's Legacy: Salvation and the English Reformers 1525–1556*, (Oxford: OU, 1994).
2. D. Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography*, (New Haven: Yale U, 1994).
3. The World of God and the Cross of Christ, both of which made the Catholic doctrine of purification in the next life redundant. See Trueman, op. cit. pp. 131–137.
4. Op. cit. pp. 198–199.
5. D. Daniell, op. cit., pp. 111–115.
6. D. Daniell, op. cit. p. 118. One-third of Tyndale's notes are his own, and he not infrequently altered or expanded what Luther had written.
7. D. Daniell, op. cit. pp. 119–124.
8. Henry's actual title would have been Defender and Protector of the League.
9. G. Mentz, *Die Wittenberger Artikel von 1536*, (Leipzig, 1905).
10. The main exception is N.S. Tjernagel, *Henry VIII and the Lutherans*, (St Louis: Concordia, 1965). See also my own *Documents of the English Reformation*, (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1994), which contains parallel Latin/German and English texts.
11. For a complete analysis of the correspondences, see G.L. Bray, *Documents of the English Reformation*, (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1994), pp. 118–161.

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