



More News

The Newsletter of the Thomas More Society of America

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International Thomas More Conference in Ireland

By William D. Byrne, M.D.

The Thomas More International Conference took place in Maynooth, Ireland this past summer at the National University of Ireland. Much time and effort was expended by Canon Thomas Finan and his staff in preparation and conduction of the Conference. During the week of August 9-16 there were many excellent papers including one by Robert Coogan from the University of Maryland and another by Gerard Wegemer from the University of Dallas, both of whom spoke to the Thomas More Society in Washington, D.C. this past year. Transcripts of the Conference will be published in book form later this year.

We heard from Amici Mori from all over the world from Japan, Australia, France, England, South America, and the United States. The last night a play was presented by the Crooked House Theatre Company entitled Cathleen Ni Houlihan by William Butler Yeats. This play recounts the events, which took place toward the end of the eighteenth century when the Irish sought French help in establishing an Irish republic. With this performance the International Thomas More Conference closed its honoring of the 200th anniversary of "The Year of the French."

Another Generation Heard From

By Thomas Rust (grandson of William D. Byrne, M.D.)

When my grandfather first suggested going to the International Thomas More Conference this summer, I was a little apprehensive, and the stack of books he gave me to read for the conference did not help. Luckily, the appeal of a trip to Ireland won out over my apprehensions. Besides, I was about to start law school in the fall, and this seemed a great way to prepare myself.

The conference, entitled "Thomas More in his Time: Renaissance Humanism & renaissance Law," was more helpful to this fledgling law student than I could have possibly imagined. Most of the speakers were very interesting, and there was always something to do at the conference. Plus, one of the hidden joys of the conference was having dinner with the wonderful conference attendees.

Whenever my grandfather would introduce me at the conference, he would mention that I was going to law school, and then he would joke that he was trying to show me that a lawyer really could get into Heaven. My response was always, "Sure, but he has to be martyred first."

However, as the conference went on I truly began to understand what my grandfather was saying. He was not saying that I had to be beheaded to get into Heaven, instead he was trying to say that being a great lawyer does not mean compromising your principles. More became the greatest lawyer of his time, but at the same time he was a man of great faith. The primary lesson I learned from the conference was that excelling in the law does not require compromising your ideals, your family, or your faith.

In fact, More showed that in order to be a great lawyer, one must not just be a student of the law but also of the human condition.

With these lessons I began law school in the fall, and it seemed a perfect conclusion to my

trip to come to law school and find a small number of students putting together a Thomas More Society here at The University of Virginia.

Really it is not a conclusion but rather a beginning.

THE THOMAS MORE SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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As of December 1, 1998

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Annual Dinner

We are pleased to announce that this year's Annual Dinner speaker will be Federal District Court Judge Thomas F. Hogan. President Reagan appointed Judge Hogan to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in 1982.

Judge Hogan has presided over many significant cases in his 16 years on the Federal Bench and has in addition served on many important judicial committees both local and for the Judicial Conference. He is Vice-Chair of the Judges' Prayer Breakfast, a member of the Knights of Malta and

of John Carroll Society.

Mark your calendars now for February 26, 1999. It will be a pleasant and informative evening at the Congressional Country Club. Further details will be coming soon.

ERASMUS AND MARGARET ROPER ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

Anne M. O'Donnell SND

As a reaction against the late medieval heresy of Lollardy, the Roman Catholic bishops of England meeting at Oxford (1407-09) forbade unauthorized translations of the Bible into English. Knowledge of the Lord's Prayer in English was sometimes used as a means to detect Lollard positions: e.g., denial of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and rejection of obedience to any ecclesiastical or secular authority in mortal sin. Yet there were many English translations of the Pater Noster ("PN") made by orthodox spiritual teachers, such as Thomas Betson in 1500 and Richard Whitford in 1530 (both monks of Sion Abbey) and by More's friend John Colet in a posthumous publication of 1532. The priest at Mass would say the PN in Latin with the laity joining in on Sed libera nos a malo, but in private devotions people could say the PN in any authorized translation available.

Today I want to examine Erasmus' commentary on the Lord's Prayer entitled Precatio Dominica (1523), translated by Thomas More's daughter, Margaret Roper, as A Devout Treatise upon the Pater Noster (c1525). Erasmus' Precatio is one of his best works for spiritual content and fluent style. Margaret Roper's version is a pioneering work of humanist translation, as well as an early literary production by a woman. I will proceed by taking key words from each of the seven petitions, and show how Erasmus developed them and how Margaret Roper translated them. Erasmus naturally gives each petition in Latin. Margaret Roper leaves the petitions in the Latin of the Vulgate because the ban on unauthorized translations of the Bible was still in force in the mid-1520s. Thus, I will use as division headings in my

paper an English version of the petitions taken from a woodcut in The Art or Craft to Live Well of 1505.

I will also note relevant correspondences to the Fathers: Origen, Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine, Chrysostom and Theophylactus.

OUR FATHER THAT ART IN HEAVEN

The "Our Father" is the pre-eminent prayer because it incorporates the believer into the filial attitude of Jesus, whose devotion was put to the supreme test during the Passion. The Greek, Latin and English New Testaments preserve the Aramaic of Jesus, "Abba, Father," recorded by Mark (14:36) from the Agony in the Garden and repeated by Paul (Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6). Erasmus appropriates Jesus' words, Abba pater, to address God in the second person (12/9). Margaret Roper repeats the phrase and translates it, "Abba pater, which in English is as much to say as 'O father father'" (13/12-14).

Although he has been accused of Pelagianism, of asserting the ability of sinful humanity to act virtuously, Erasmus sees humans as born of the devil and reborn of God in baptism: "at the font-stone in baptism, [we have] renounced and forsaken our father the devil" (13/17-19). Ever since the early church, the Lord's Prayer has been part of the preparation for adult baptism. In Sermon 56, Augustine expounds the Pater Noster to a group of catechumens, "But even now, before you are born, you have been conceived of His seed, for you are about to be born of the font, which is, as it were, the womb of the Church" (#5). Erasmus refers to this baptismal setting of the Lord's Prayer six times: twice each in the First, Third and Fifth Petitions.

In this long pamphlet, Erasmus elaborates a full range of love: Amare or "to love passionately" refers to God's love for us, "Thou first loved us and of thy goodness also it cometh and of thy reward that we do love thee again" (15/2-4). Red-amare refers to our return of love to God, "Thou wouldst we should rather love thee as thy children than fear thee as thy servants and bondmen" (13/44-15/2). Diligere or "to esteem highly" refers to love for our neighbor, "we should love our brother as our own self" (51/33-34). De-amare or "to love dearly" refers to our preference for creatures in opposition to God, "The flesh hath

his proper will and delight, which man naturally desireth to keep and follow" (39/27-29).

Erasmus uses amor or charitas for God's love for us much less than benignitas, for which there are a multitude of translations: "kindness or mildness, liberality or generosity." Margaret Roper usually translates benignitas as "goodness": "thy wonderful goodness" (23/30), "thy exceeding goodness" (43/37-38), "thy liberal goodness" (63/3-4). Her second definition of benignitas is "gentleness", which the OED (3) defines as "Good breeding, courtesy, affability" (obs.) or "kindliness, mildness." Margaret translates benignitas as "gentleness." The word "gentle", related to noble birth, is characteristic of a hierarchical society. As archbishop of Constantinople, Chrysostom was greatly aware of socio-economic inequities. In Homily 19 (389-97 AD) he embraces rich and poor, master and servant, king and common soldier, philosopher and barbarian: "For to all hath He given one nobility, having vouchsafed to be called the Father of all alike" (#6).

Erasmus emphasizes God's goodness, by sometimes using bonitas, "thy mere [i.e. sheer] goodness" (11/23-24) and "marvelous goodness" (15/40). Margaret occasionally supplies Erasmus' diction where he did not use it. Thus she translates aeterna tua uoluntas (26/22-23), "thy eternal will" as "thy goodness [ere] the beginning of the world" (27/31-32). Erasmus uses a third word for the fatherhood of God, pietas. Besides its first meaning, the devotion of inferiors to superiors, pietas can also mean "loving." Margaret Roper translates it as: "the ghostly [spiritual] love and affection of god" (17/27), "thy goodness" (43/14), "thy fatherly love" (57/20-21). Thus Erasmus describes God's attitude toward us as benignitas, bonitas and pietas but seldom as gratia.

In the medieval church, the scholastics constructed a theology of grace as a quality, a creature infused into the human soul. Whereas the Vulgate translated Luke 1:30 as gratia plena or "full of grace", Erasmus translates it as gratiosa or "favored." Only once in this long pamphlet does Erasmus use the word gratia (cf. 46/18), referring to a salutary reception of the Eucharist, "mingling it with thy heavenly grace" (47/23-24). In the Sixth Petition Margaret glosses tuis dotibus (58/7) as "thy gifts of grace" (59/9-10), giving

both the Anglo-Saxon and Latin synonyms.

Margaret uses the word "favor" only twice. God is "favorer of concord" (51/5-6). In affirming that children expect to obtain the necessities of life from generous parents, Margaret renders parentibus propiciis (44/6-7) as "their friends' favor" (45/7).

What should be our reaction to this goodness of God? Trying to avoid a public rupture with Luther in 1523, Erasmus emphasizes fiducia. Here is a succinct quotation in which Erasmus presents Luther's teaching on justification by faith in an orthodox way, "And yet we have not this hope and trust of our own merits and deserts, which we know verily as none, but only of thy liberal goodness" (35/37-40). Although Erasmus uses fiducia more frequently, he occasionally reverts to the traditional fides in sincera fide (44/22), "by pure faith" (45/30). Margaret translates spem certam (52/21) as "full hope and trust" (53/32). The name "Our Father" is so rich that Erasmus examines it at length; thus the first section of this paper is correspondingly long, but the rest is reassuringly short.

1. SANCTIFIED BE THY NAME

The First Petition of the Lord's Prayer raises the theological question, how can humans sanctify God's name? Augustine enlightens his catechumens in Sermon 56, "For this is what you are asking, namely, that what is always holy in itself may be hallowed in you" (#5). Instead of "sanctify" Erasmus uses variants of "glory" in the First Petition over thirty times. Sometimes Margaret Roper translates the same Latin phrase in different words. She renders tui nominis gloria (16/22-23) first as "the glory and honor of thy most holy name" (17/30-31) and later as "the light and glory of thy name" (25/16). Although Erasmus focuses on God's glory, he also gives many examples of human glory. Margaret Roper omits the following example from her list, Parentis enim gloriam pro sua ducunt (16/15-16). I translate the clause as "For they reckon the glory of a parent for their own." Perhaps her filial piety did not allow her to arrogate her father's glory to herself.

2. THY KINGDOM COME TO US

Erasmus does not refer to any human ruler as king, but only to God. Erasmus yearns for the joy of heaven, "whan face to face we shall see and behold our king and father reigning in his great glory" (35/35-37). In the Second Petition, Erasmus uses various forms of rex and regnum over thirty-five times. Margaret Roper also gives a variety of renderings, e.g., "the heavenly kingdom and the realm of God" (27/20-21).

Erasmus focusses on the kingdom of God, but he occasionally mentions the "realm of the devil" (33/4). Since Satan disregards the well-being of his subjects, his rule is a tyranny, from which Erasmus prays to be delivered: "out of the tyrannous handling of the fiend" (27/9-10) and from "the tyrannous service of the devil" (29/15). Perhaps Erasmus derived this notion from Origen, who wrote AD c230, "Every saint, being ruled by God as his king and obedient to the spiritual laws of God, as it were, dwells within himself as in a well-ordered city.... On the other hand, every sinner is subject to tyranny under the prince of this world [John 12.31]."

3. THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH AS IN HEAVEN

Jerome in the fifth century and Theophylactus in the eleventh both allude to the angels. Jerome prays "that as the angels serve thee in a blameless way in heaven, so may humans serve thee on earth." Theophylactus, a Bulgarian bishop prays, "Just as angels do thy will, thus grant us to do it." Following a more important model than the angels, Christians want to obey the Father's will as Jesus did. In his treatise on the Lord's Prayer written in AD 252, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, referred to Jesus' Agony in the Garden. Erasmus both read Cyprian and made his own Latin translation of the Gospel, "Father, if it may conveniently be, suffer this drink of my passion to be withdrawn from me, howbeit, yet thy will be fulfilled and not mine" (39/19-22). Margaret Roper glosses "cup" as "this drink of my passion."

4. OUR DAILY BREAD GIVE US TODAY

Erasmus follows the three-fold explication of "bread" from Augustine's commentary of

AD 393-94, "[A]t one and the same time we are praying for the needful daily bread for the body, and the consecrated visible Bread, and the invisible bread of the Word of God" (2.7.27). Thus Erasmus mentions: "meat [food] and bodily apparel" (45/21), "The blessed body of thy dear son is the bread" (47/13-14), "the bread and teaching of the Gospel" (47/26-27).

In naming the Eucharist as the second kind of bread, Erasmus refers to the Church, where the sacrament is celebrated. His two references to the Church echo Ps. 67:7, a favorite scripture passage of Thomas More. He alludes to this verse in the Dialogue Concerning Heresies, "And in the Church is the Holy Ghost, ... which maketh all of one mind in the house of God, that is in the Church" (CWM 6/1, 191/20-22). Erasmus describes Christians as those "that dwell within thy large house of the Church" (47/15-16); and as "thy children, whom in one house of the Church [thou] accompaniest and with the common sacraments of the Church [thou] dost nourish" (51/6-12).

Although Erasmus transliterates the Greek ecclesia here, he translated it as congregatio or "assembly" nine times in his Latin New Testament. There is only one use of "congregation" in Margaret Roper, a translation not of ecclesia but of consortium, "by whom [i.e, Jesus] it hath pleased thee of thy goodness to take us into the congregation of the dwellers in thy realm" (29/37-40). In this clause Margaret supplies the characteristic Erasmian emphasis on God's goodness.

5. AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTS

In the half dozen patristic commentaries on the Lord's Prayer which I read, I found only one reference to Penance. In the early church this sacrament was reserved for major sins like apostasy, murder and adultery. Origen writes AD c230, "All of us indeed can forgive sins committed against us.... He, however, who is inspired by Jesus as were the Apostles, ... forgives what God forgives and retains the sins that cannot be healed" (Prayer 28.8). The other Fathers discuss mutual forgiveness by one Christian of another, rather than forgiveness by the priest of the penitent in confession.

Erasmus was quite aware that our present form of annual confession to a priest was decreed by

Lateran IV in 1215. In his colloquy "The Whole Duty of Youth," published in March 1522 a year before the Precatio, young Gaspar acknowledges his sins daily to Christ and limits himself to a brief confession of serious sins to a prudent priest. In the Precatio Erasmus uses agnosco to acknowledge either God's goodness or our wretchedness, "We acknowledge thine excellency.... And again we acknowledge and confess our own vileness" (11/15, 11/17-18). Erasmus also emphasizes imbecillitas or "weakness" as a cause of sin. Margaret Roper uses doublets to translate the Latin word: "by reason of the weakness and frailty of nature" (51/22-23).

Erasmus uses the Latin word for "mercy" only twice in this pamphlet: "We may thank thy mercy" (19/22); "only merciful" (25/6). Instead of misericordia, Erasmus prefers clementia and propicium; it is Margaret Roper who translates these words as "mercy": "thy great gentleness and mercy" (51/28-29) and "having thee merciful unto us" (55/29-30). Although Erasmus frequently promotes peace, e.g., in his pamphlet The Complaint of Peace (1517), he seldom mentions peace in the Precatio. The following example is especially noteworthy for Margaret Roper's vivid translation of properandum or "hurry": "hie us apace to our brother and labor to be in peace with him" (53/24-26).

6. AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

Instead of interior temptations, Erasmus describes open attacks on faith. Writing in 1523, Erasmus is probably thinking of Suleiman the Magnificent's conquest of Belgrade in 1521 and of Rhodes in 1522 (cf. Dialogue of Comfort, CWM 12, cxxiv). Although Margaret Roper published A Devout Treatise c1524 when More was a member of the King's Council, critics usually read her translation as an unwitting prophecy of her father's imprisonment and death in 1534-35. Especially applicable to More are these tribulations: "[to] be deprived of the company of his most dear wife and well-beloved children" (49/9-11); "loss of our goods, imprisonment ... and horrible and fearful death" (57/41-44); and "beheaded" (31/13-14).

7. BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Erasmus refers to the triple enemy of the flesh, the world and the devil in the Third and Sixth Petitions: "here we have sore and grievous conflict with the flesh, the world and the devil" (37/31-32); "So thy most dear and honorable son was ever wont to overcome the devil, thus the flesh, and thus the world" (59/25-28).

In the Seventh Petition, his shortest section of commentary on the Lord's Prayer, Erasmus refers to the devil as the compendium of evil, "We fear no destruction of that evil and wicked devil" (63/31-32). In this he follows Chrysostom and Theophylactus, who discuss, not evils in general, but the devil as evil personified. In Homily 19, Chrysostom asserts that Satan is the evil one "pre-eminently, by reason of the excess of his wickedness, and because he, in no respect injured by us, wages against us implacable war" (#10). Theophylactus follows Chrysostom in glossing a malo thus, "He does not say, 'from evil persons': for they do not afflict us [without] cause, but 'malicious person,' namely the devil." It is noteworthy that Erasmus, the supposed Pelagian, is so conscious of the power of evil.

AMEN

The following prayer is not found in this commentary on the PN: "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." According to modern biblical scholars, the doxology was taken from the Greek liturgy, written in the margin of a manuscript and mistakenly incorporated into some late Greek manuscripts but not into the Vulgate. The addition is found in the following commentaries: Chrysostom, Theophylactus, and Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament. The interpolation is omitted from these other commentaries: Origen, Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine, and Erasmus' Precatio.

In his long pamphlet, Erasmus prefers classical rather than ecclesiastical diction, long but supple sentences, elegance based on parallel clauses. His style is conscious of its art but more so of its theme. In her translation, Margaret Roper chooses ecclesiastical diction livened with colloquialisms and clear sentences extended by doublets. Her style is earnest and flexible. Erasmus dedicates his best style to the best of prayers. Margaret Roper makes a faithful translation, supplying what is elliptical or omitting an

occasional phrase or clause in a series of parallels. Erasmus' commentary on the Lord's Prayer has the rich complexity of a Bach cantata; Margaret Roper's translation has the lilting purity of a solo soprano.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I have modernized the spelling and punctuation for ease in reading.

The petitions of the Lord's Prayer are taken from The Art or Craft to Live Well, 1505, in Eamon Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars (New Haven and London: Yale, 1992) facing 116.

Citations of Erasmus, Precatio Dominica (1523) and of Margaret Roper, A Devout Treatise upon the Pater Noster (c1525) refer to Moreana 7 (August 1965) 9-64, which reprints the version of PD in the British Library and of DT in the Beinecke Library, Yale.

In his Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount (AD 393-94), Augustine concludes his explication of the last petition with a series of analogues between the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, seven Beatitudes and the Seven Petitions of the Lord's Prayer (2.11.38):

1. Fear of Lord / Poor in spirit / Hallowed be Thy name
2. Piety / Meek / Thy kingdom come
3. Knowledge / Mourn / Thy will be done on earth as ... in heaven
4. Fortitude / Hunger & thirst for justice / ... daily bread
5. Counsel / Merciful / Forgive us our debts as we forgive ...
6. Understanding / Pure of heart / Lead us not into temptation
7. Wisdom / Peacemakers / But deliver us from evil