



MoreNews

The Newsletter of the Thomas More Society of America April 2001

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

Professor Michael Mack will speak to the Society on May 15 from 12:00-1:30 p.m. Dr. Mack’s topic will be “The Liberal Arts: A Classical Ideal and Its Historical Development.” The luncheon will be at The Army/Navy Club, located at Farragut Square: 901 17th St. NW. Please see enclosed invitation for additional information and RSVP.

The annual St. Thomas More Feastday mass and reception will be held in June. Please look for additional information in the mail next month.

Tyndale's Answer to More: "A Proper Text and Well Framed"*

By Sr. Anne. M. O'Donnell, S.N.D

I take my title from a sentence in Tyndale's *Answer to More*: "How saye ye / is not this a propir texte and well framed . . . ?" (37/30-31). The adjective "proper" and the participial phrase "well framed" are doublets because they mean nearly the same thing and both modify "text": "proper" means "handsome, well-made" (OED I.8.); "well framed" means "well fabricated, well expressed" (OED 8.).

For the first part of this study, I modestly describe my critical edition of Tyndale's *Answer to More* as a "proper" or "well-made" book. I will examine in turn its constituent parts: text and variants of 1531, sidenotes of 1573, commentary, glossary, and indices. I trust that these bibliographical topics will engage the interest of all those who love books.

For the second part of the lecture, I use the participle "framed" in its modern meaning: "enclosed as in a frame" (verb, OED 9., 1705ff). I apply "well framed" to the relationship between Tyndale's *Answer to More* and the two books that flank it. I will compare More's *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, Tyndale's *Answer to More*, and More's *Confutation of Tyndale* on their most important points. I hope that this theological analysis will deepen your understanding of the debate between the two foremost opponents in the first generation of the English Reformation.

As a prologue to the description of my edition and to the analysis of the relationships between More's *Dialogue*, Tyndale's *Answer*, and More's *Confutation*, I will introduce you to the life and works of More and Tyndale. Some five hundred years after the birth of More and Tyndale, I offer you these two verbal portraits.

Thomas More (1477/78-1535) was born the son of a lawyer in London some fourteen years before Tyndale. After two years at Oxford, he studied law at New Inn and Lincoln's Inn. He married Jane Colt in 1505, fathered four children, lost his first wife, then married Alice Middleton in 1511. After serving in a number of professional and civic offices, More was appointed to the King's Council in 1517 and knighted in 1521.

The text of Tyndale's *Answer* makes no explicit reference to More's political career, but I do so in the commentary. When Tyndale scoffs at the wheeling and dealing in Parliament, I note that More as Speaker of the House in 1523 persuaded the Commons to approve money for the invasion of Scotland and France: not the 800,000 pounds sought but less than one-fifth as much (136,000 pounds or 17%). Grateful for this assistance, Cardinal Wolsey gave More a bonus of 100 pounds. I also note that More served as Lord Chancellor (October 1529 to May 1532) during the first three sessions of the Reformation Parliament. There, he remained aloof from the king's marital problems while advancing bills beneficial to Lords and Commons.

More's high political status added luster to his works of religious polemic, but Tyndale's *Answer* shrewdly cites More's humanist work *Utopia* (168/3, 194/7). Against the middle-aged defender of popular piety and traditional English, Tyndale cites the work of a younger More, who had praised religious toleration and Greek studies. Resisting the spread of the Reformation, More now attacks Tyndale's New Testament, the first English translation to be made directly from the original Greek. Tyndale believes that More's opposition was motivated by avarice (22/14-15n). Mistakenly, Tyndale compares More to archetypal biblical sinners: to Balaam, who was not able to curse Israel even for silver or gold (cf. 14/15n); and to Judas, who sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver (cf. 14/14n). We

know, as Tyndale did not, that More refused a gift of four or five thousand pounds which the bishops offered in gratitude for his religious polemic (Roper 46/16ff).

I must emphasize that, when Tyndale published *Answer* in July 1531, More as Lord Chancellor stood in the high noon of royal favor. Ten months were to pass before Archbishop William Warham accepted the king's claim of authority over the English Church, and before More submitted his resignation later the same day (May 15). More's dark night came three or four years later. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London in April 1534 and beheaded in July 1535 for upholding England's membership in "the comen corps of crystendome" (CWM 6/1.413/30). His last words were, "I die the king's good servant and God's first."

Some fourteen years younger than More, William Tyndale (1491?-1536) was born into a family of yeoman farmers on the Welsh border. He spent a dozen years at Oxford where he earned his B.A. in 1512 and his M.A. in 1515. Besides the usual studies in Latin, Tyndale studied Greek at Magdalen College, Oxford. After his ordination to the priesthood, Tyndale may have studied at Cambridge, where Erasmus had served as Professor of Divinity and Lecturer in Greek from 1511 to 1514. In the early 1520s Tyndale returned to his native Gloucestershire, where he was a tutor at Little Sodbury Manor. In August 1535, about six weeks after More's death, Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn visited here while making a royal progress (Daniell 54n19 citing LP 8.989). Although the manor is still in private hands, the owners opened their doors to members of the Tyndale Society in September 1994.

In 1516 Erasmus had published the first printed Greek New Testament with a corrected Latin translation. This edition would serve as the basis for both Luther's and Tyndale's versions. Luther published his German translations of the Christian Scriptures in 1522 and of the Hebrew Scriptures in his complete German Bible in 1534. Both Erasmus and Luther inspired Tyndale to translate the Bible into the vernacular, not from the Latin Vulgate but directly from the original languages.

In April 1524, Tyndale left England for the Continent, where he could more freely publish his biblical translations. Tyndale's first attempt at publishing his English New Testament at Cologne in 1525 was interrupted by the Catholic authorities at Matt. 22.12. Tyndale was able to publish a complete English New Testament at Worms in 1526. We would use this illustration of St. John from the Worms New Testament for the frontispiece of *Word, Church, and State: Tyndale Quincentenary Essays* (1998). After working briefly in Cologne and Worms, Tyndale spent most of his years of exile in Antwerp, a port facing England. Here More composed *Utopia*, Book 2 in 1515, and Tyndale published his translation of the Pentateuch in 1530, Jonas in 1531, and a revised New Testament in 1534. Tyndale also wrote and published six major works of polemic and exegesis in Antwerp.

Tyndale believed in the principle of *sola scriptura*: that the basic truths of Christianity are so clearly expressed in the Bible that all should be able to read and interpret it for themselves. Tyndale also believed in the principle of *sola fide*: that we are saved only through faith in Christ. Furthermore, Tyndale declared that the papacy was totally corrupt, and he hinted that the Eucharist is only a sign of Jesus's Passion and Death. When he published his unorthodox beliefs, Tyndale foresaw his probable fate. He was arrested in May 1535 and condemned by a church court for rejecting papal authority and human merit. Tyndale was garrotted and his corpse burnt outside Brussels in October 1536. His last words were "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." This prayer for the authorized publication of an English Bible was answered in 1537. The so-called "Matthew's Bible" contains, not only

Tyndale's Pentateuch and New Testament, but his translations of Joshua through 2 Chronicles. These were all included in the King James Bible (1611). His anonymous contribution, like leaven in flour (Luke 13.21), has permeated the English language.

More lived most of his fifty-eight years at the center of English political life, whereas Tyndale lived most of his forty-five years on the circumference. More saw himself as a knight defending the Church Universal, whereas Tyndale heard himself as a voice in the desert calling the Little Flock of the elect. I prefer to see both men as witnesses to Christ: the Mystical Body for More and the merciful Savior for Tyndale. (...)

To conclude, I will compare More's hope for a renewed Christendom with Tyndale's goal of a reformed Christianity. More's ideal church would be an international body under the papacy with few but holy clerics. There would be translations of the Bible in all the modern languages with access controlled by the bishops. Religious images and pilgrimages would be allowed, but the sacraments and the responsibilities of one's state in life would be paramount.

Tyndale's ideal church would be a local congregation in fellowship with other congregations. There would be scholarly translations of the Bible in all the modern languages. The new technology of printing would be directed towards advancing the literacy of all. Religious images and sacraments would be allowed, but their efficacy would depend on proper religious instruction. Gratitude for assurance of salvation would overflow in service of one's neighbor. Although they were bitter opponents, More and Tyndale both revered the Bible; both had a Christocentric piety; both focussed on the laity. While we cannot reconcile all their differences, I trust that I have shown that it is possible to find grounds of agreement between these two Christian witnesses.

** This article is excerpted from a paper presented by the author upon publication of this book.*

Msgr. Robert S. Sokolowski
Professor of Philosophy, Catholic University of America
March 29, 2001, Army-Navy Club
Farragut Square, NW, Washington, DC

ST. JOHN FISHER'S SERMON ON GOOD FRIDAY

In 1521 and 1526, John Fisher, the Bishop of Rochester, preached at London in St. Paul's churchyard against Lutheranism, but we are not certain when or where he preached this sermon on Christ's Passion. Nevertheless, it recommends itself to us for its clear organization, vivid imagery, and earnest hatred of sin.

Fisher takes as his text an incident from the call of Ezekiel when the Lord God handed him a book containing "lamentations, and canticles, and woe" (Ezek. 2.10, Douai-Rheims Version). The prophet's book was a scroll, but the Christian's book is the crucifix. A medieval book had two wooden boards for a cover, parchment for pages, black letters and red capitals for script. So the cross is constructed of two wooden beams and contains the Word of God. The body of Christ is marked with lines made by scourging and five, red wounds. The book of the crucifix contains lamentations expressing sorrow, canticles inspiring joy, and woes giving a warning.

The lamentations of the crucifix evoke fear, shame, sorrow, and hate. When we see the dreadful sufferings of Christ, we are filled with fear of the punishment our sins deserve. We are ashamed that Christ accepted so much suffering in our place. From the suffering of Christ, we learn how much the Father hates sin and how serious it is. Human weakness and wickedness can have devastating consequences.

The canticles of the crucifix inspire love, hope, joy, and comfort. The cross shows the love of the Father and the Son for us and moves us to love God in return. Since we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we are filled with great hope of reaching heaven. The passion and death of the Son has turned the wrath of the Father to joy; therefore, we too can rejoice. We are filled with consolation that our sins have been forgiven.

Fisher describes eleven woes of the crucifix, but Msgr. Sokolowski limits himself to the last two: Christ's desolation and death on the cross. Jesus felt abandoned by the Father for three hours on the cross, but the damned suffer the pain of loss for all eternity. Jesus spent three days in the tomb, but those in hell suffer everlasting death. As a priest, Msgr. Sokolowski deplors the casual attitude toward sin that many of our contemporaries exhibit, e.g., addiction to drugs and alcohol.

The book of the crucifix shows us that the Son became part of our world, the worst as well as the best. Yet Christ overcame death by his resurrection.

Precis made by Anne M. O'Donnell, SND

Wegemer Lecture

Reactions from those who attended the recent Gerard Wegemer lecture at Catholic University seemed to be unanimous in appreciation of the More scholar's insights. Having presented to the Society at least twice previously, Wegemer delivered his April 3 lecture on the topic "Conscience, Law, and Integrity: Thomas More's Perspective." Through a nuanced and finely-crafted study of More's life and writings, Wegemer painted a vivid picture of the would-be saint, of whom faithfulness to duty and adherence to conscience are hallmarks.

One of the keepsakes from Wegemer's talk was his commentary on the well-known portrait of More. We are all familiar with that most common depiction by Hans Holbein, with the subject in his cap and rich robes of office, adorned with ring and medallion and overarched by dark green tapestry. Most have, no doubt, glanced at this portrait many times and thought little of the possible symbolism. Wegemer revealed the iconography of the artist, which the average admirer of More would not be privileged to know: the green drapery is drawn back enough to present an open space, signifying More's openness to transcendence. More is captured with a pensive, even stern expression—despite his jovial nature—which reveals the weight he gave to his duties both as devoted family man and as one holding the highest office of Lay Chancellor of England. In his hands rest an official document of some unknown character, disclosing to us the fact that, (in the words of Wegemer), "transcendence does not take him away from duty; both are equally important to this man of conscience."

Guided by Wegemer's discussion of this great and humble saint, one is left to conclude (rightly) that it was only through such a union of duty and transcendence—integrity, as More called it—that he could disregard all worldly acclaim and titles for the sake of what some would denigrate as a "foolish scruple of conscience." And it was by virtue of that "foolish scruple"—that courageous act that encapsulated his lifelong pattern—that led Pius XI to call him a "shining lighthouse," just as he proclaimed him a saint and model for all those to follow him in the world.

In Memoriam

Anne M McGrath The Society wishes to honor the memory of Anne McGrath, who died on February 19 of this year. Mrs. McGrath was a successful real estate agent, and a devoted wife, mother, and grandmother. She was untiring in her commitment to the Church, at Most Blessed Sacrament—and invaluable to the community. The Society has been privileged to enjoy her membership. May she rest in peace.

Msgr. John D. Benson The Society also pays tribute to former member Monsignor John Benson, who died on February 5 of this year. Monsignor had retired in 1991 as the beloved pastor of Our Lady of Victory Church, N.W. Although retired, he often continued to help at Our Lady whenever he was needed. During his priestly life, he also served at St. Augustine, NW, the U.S. Army reserve, the parishes of Little Flower and St. Jane de Chantal (Bethesda), and Holy Family Church (Mitchellville). Msgr. Benson will be missed greatly. May he rest in peace.

Member News

Appointment The Society is pleased to congratulate Jane Golden Belford on the occasion of her appointment as new chancellor for the archdiocese of Washington. Cardinal McCarrick announced the appointment in a March 23rd statement. Belford is a local attorney and mother, who served from 1995-97 as the first woman president of the John Carroll Society. Belford is the first layperson and woman to hold this position, in which she will serve as member of the cardinal's senior staff, corporate member of all archdiocesan corporations, and founding chairperson of the newly instituted Archdiocesan Women's Commission. Our best wishes to Ms. Belford as she assumes her new post.

Book published Russell Shaw, another noteworthy member of the Society, recently saw published his book on the

timely issue of authority in the Church. In *Papal Primacy in the Third Millenium, (Our Sunday Visitor, \$12.95)*, the author discussed the logic behind the naming of the several large groups of new cardinals by Pope John Paul II. He also addresses current threats to papal primacy, such as an internet Constitution proposal which would greatly limit the teaching capacity of the Supreme Pontiff. Shaw explores the criticisms underlying such extreme proposals, and offers practical considerations as to how the Church might approach or amend them. The former secretary for public affairs of the National Conference for Catholic Bishops, Shaw was recently named to a five-year term as a consultant to the Pontifical Council for Social Communications at the Vatican.