

A STUDY OF THE

Protestant Reformation

1517 - 2017

The 500th Anniversary





Introduction: Part 10

After three days of meetings on October 12-14, 1518, the Augsburg Interrogation was over. Cajetan had traveled from Rome to thunder, “The pope is above the council and also above the Holy Scripture. Recant!” Unwilling to allow Luther to speak and unable to convince him to recant, Cajetan became frustrated and angry and described him as a “deep-eyed German beast filled with strange speculations.” For Luther’s part, he remembered one thing about the interrogation in the Fugger house: “Recant.” “But,” he said, “I could not bring myself to say those six letters, REVOKO [‘I recant’]! He had insisted on Scriptural proof, but it was not given. “Christ,” he maintained, “has acquired a treasure by his merits; the merits, therefore, are not the treasure.”



Introduction: Part 10

Luther returned to the monastery where he was staying. He had stood fast. But there were rumors that reached him, that if he did not recant, he was to “be seized and thrown into a dungeon.” From his room, he wrote to his friend, Dr. Carlstadt, “Three days my business has been in hand, and matters are now at such a point that I have no longer any hope of returning to you, and I have nothing to look for but excommunication....Yet the Lord God lives and reigns: to his protection I commit myself, and I doubt not that, in answer to the prayers of a few pious souls, he will send me deliverance; I imagine I feel them praying for me.” That evening, Luther and some of his friends celebrated the Lord’s Supper together.



Luther Escapes From Augsburg

The following week, before daybreak on Wednesday, October 20, Luther fled Augsburg. His friends brought a pony to the door of the monastery. After farewells, “he mounts and sets off, without a bridle for his horse, without boots or spurs, and unarmed. The magistrate of the city had sent him as a guide one of the horse-police who was well acquainted with the roads. This servant conducts him in the dark through the silent streets of Augsburg. They direct their course to a small gate in the wall of the city....At length Luther and his guide arrive at the little gate; they pass through. They are out of Augsburg; and soon they put their horses to a gallop, and ride speedily away.” D’Aubigne writes, “Since Rome had gained nothing, she had lost.”

Luther's Disappointment

“Luther was wise to leave Augsburg hastily after several unhappy meetings with Cajetan: he was in a state of deep disappointment, and now convinced that Thomists like the Cardinal had formed a powerful conspiracy with pagan Aristotle against the truth.”



Diarmaid MacCullough

1951 –

Professor of the History of the Church
Oxford University

Psalm 124:7

“We have escaped like a bird
from the snare of the fowlers;
The snare is broken,
and we have escaped!”



- “When God chooses, he can not only rescue his people at the time but put it beyond the power of his enemies to do them further injury.”
- “The world thinks it a fine thing to spread snares for the feet of the righteous; but the weapons of the church’s warfare are not carnal. God’s cause needs not the help of man’s intrigues (schemes).”

- William S. Plumer

Luther's Reflection On His Escape



“The cardinal would have liked to have me in his hands to send me to Rome. He is vexed, no doubt, at my escape. He imagined I was in his power at Augsburg; he thought he had me; but he was holding an eel by the tail. Is it not disgraceful that these people set so high a value upon me? They would give a heap of crowns to have me in their clutches, while our Lord Jesus Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver.”



Back in Wittenberg

After a long trip, Luther arrived in Wittenberg on October 30, one day before All Saints Day (10-day trip; 296 miles). Cajetan had written to Frederick the Wise, “I beg your highness will send him to Rome, or expel him from your states.” The elector, in turn, forwarded the letter to Luther who then composed a long letter to Frederick. The elector responded to Cajetan: “Since Doctor Martin has appeared before you at Augsburg, you should be satisfied. We did not expect that you would endeavor to make him retract without having convinced him of his errors. None of the learned men in our principality have informed me that Martin’s doctrine is impious, anti-Christian, or heretical.” He refused to send Martin to Rome or expel him from his states.

Right and Wrong



G.K. Chesterton
1874-1936

“Right is right, even if nobody does it.
Wrong is wrong, even if everybody is
wrong about it.”

- G.K. Chesterton



Another Tactic Against Luther

- Trying another tactic, Charles of Milititz, the pope's chamberlain, was sent on a mission by the pope to influence Frederick the Wise. He arrived in Germany in December, 1518.
- He brought new privileges for the Castle Church, whereby purgatory could be reduced by a hundred years for every bone of the saints in Frederick's collection – for those who made appropriate contributions.
- Milititz's visit was preceded by letters from the pope and the *curia* urging all to help them against that “child of Satan, son of perdition, scrofulous (morally corrupt) sheep, and tare in the vineyard, Martin Luther.”

The Golden Rose



- Milititz also brought the *Golden Rose* to Frederick the Wise.
- “Since the eleventh century, an ornament of gold, shaped like a rose spray, had been from time to time blessed by the pope and conferred on a sovereign or other person in recognition of distinguished service” (Luther’s *Table Talk*).
- “He was very shrewd; he gave 600 florins to Karl von Milititz, who brought a golden rose as a gift from the pope, although the rose itself was scarcely worth two hundred” (Luther).



On the Political Front

- Milititz also brought with him 70 apostolic briefs, which would serve as passports as he transported Luther back to Rome.
- Several things prevented Milititz from completing his mission: (1) the death of Maximilian on January 12, 1519; (2) political troubles broke out in the north and south of Germany; (3) Frederick now had more power. “The tempest suspended its rage,” said Luther. “The papal excommunication began to fall into contempt. Under the shadow of the elector’s viceroyalty, the gospel circulated far and wide, and popery suffered great damage in consequence.”
- Political liberty was advancing the cause of evangelical Christianity.



Luther Meets With Milititz

- Milititz spoke with their mutual friend, Spalatin, who offered his house in Altenburg for a meeting with Luther, January 4-6, 1519.
- Luther left Wittenberg on January 2nd or 3rd for the meeting.
- Milititz began by trying to flatter Luther's pride: "If I had an army of 25,000 men, I do not think I should be able to carry you to Rome." Luther responded with humility: "God stays the waves of the sea upon the shore, and he stays them – with sand."
- "Beware of raising a tempest that would cause the destruction of Christendom," warned Milititz as he wept. "Crocodile tears," commented Luther.



“A Judas Kiss”

- Luther resumed, “I offer to be silent for the future on this matter, and to let it die away of itself, provided my opponents are silent on their part; but if they continue attacking me, a serious struggle will soon arise out of a trifling quarrel. My weapons are quite prepared. I will do still more.”
- After a second meeting the next day, the two of them had dinner together, after which the Milititz opened his arms to the heretical doctor and kissed him. “A Judas kiss,” thought Luther. “I pretended not to understand these Italian artifices (cunning).”
- “The error of Rome lay in regarding as a mere monkish quarrel what was in reality an awakening of the Church. The kisses of a papal chamberlain could not check the renewal of Christendom.”



Milititz Gets Drunk

- Milititz begins to accept invitations to the tables of heretics.
- D'Aubigne records that “soon becoming inebriated (it is a pope who relates this), the pontifical nuncio was no longer master of his tongue. The Saxons led him to speak of the pope and the court of Rome, and Milititz, confirming the old proverb, *in vino veritas* (when the wine is in, the wit comes out), gave an account in the openness of his heart of all the practices and disorders of the papacy. His companions smiled, urging and pressing him to continue; everything was exposed; they took notes of what he said; and these scandals were afterwards made a matter of public reproach against the Romans at the Diet of Worms in the presence of all Germany.”



The Reformation Spreads

- The number of students coming to Wittenberg was increasing – some of the most distinguished young men of Germany.
- Frobenius, a printer in Basel, published a collection of Luther's works. He sent 600 copies into France and Spain.
- In England, his books were received with eagerness.
- Some Spanish merchants translated them into their mother tongue and sent them from Antwerp to Spain.
- Calvia, a learned bookseller, carried a great number of copies to Italy.
- "The arrival of the Wittenberg doctor's writings everywhere forms the first page of the Reformation" (D'Aubigne).



Whatever Became of Tetzel?

- Milititz visited his old friend Spalatin. As soon as he began to complain about Luther, Spalatin spoke out against Tetzel. Instead of being the accuser, he found himself being the accused.
- He summoned Tetzel to meet with him at Altenburg to justify his conduct (he had hidden in the college of St. Paul at Leipzig).
- Claiming to be “nowhere safe,” Tetzel refused to meet with him. Milititz traveled to see him anyway and “overwhelmed him with reproaches, accused him of being the author of all his trouble, and threatened him with the pope’s displeasure.”
- Tetzel fell into despair and died not long after. It was believed that “grief accelerated his death.”

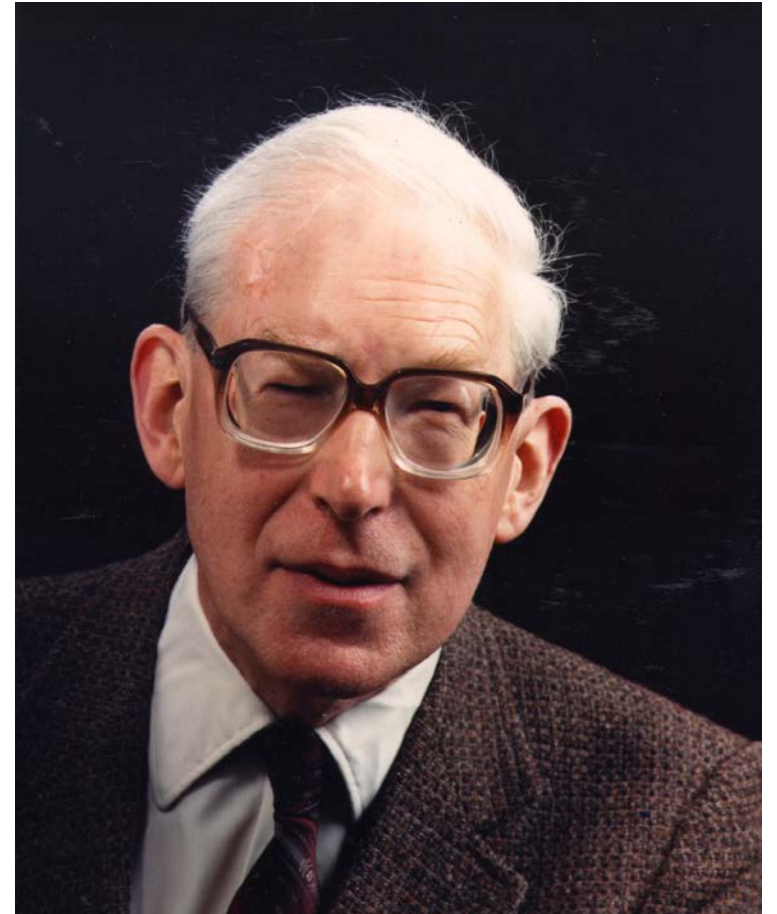


For Reflection

1. Alister McGrath: “Evangelicalism has generally not fostered any serious attempt to engage with the life of the mind, by encouraging believers to think within a specifically Christian framework across the entire spectrum of modern learning and culture.”
2. John Frame: Scripture “is authoritative not only in its propositions but in *everything* that it says (Matt. 4:4)....To say that Scripture is authoritative is not only to say that its propositions are true, it is also to say that its commands are binding, its questions demand answers of us, its exclamations should become the shouts of our hearts, its promises must be relied upon, and so forth.”

For Reflection

3. J.I. Packer: “A key principle of the Reformation witness to biblical authority is that all private and traditional interpretations of Scripture must be scrutinized lest unwittingly they misrepresent the detailed instruction of Scripture by distorting its plain, natural sense, as determined from within by study of the language used in relation to overall biblical idiom and other biblical passages.”



For Reflection



4. “The evangelical commitment to the authority of Scripture represents a careful and critical assessment of rival approaches to authority, and an affirmation that Scripture must be regarded as carrying greater theological and spiritual weight than them”:
(1) Culture, (2) Experience, (3) Reason, & (4) Tradition.



Conclusion

“It was not Luther who separated from Rome: it was Rome that separated from Luther, and thus rejected the ancient faith of the Catholic Church, of which he was then the representative. It was not Luther who deprived Rome of her power and made her bishop descend from a throne which he had usurped. The doctrines he proclaimed, the word of the apostles which God manifested anew in the Universal Church with great power and admirable purity, could alone prevail against that dominion which had for centuries enslaved the Church.”