LUTHER SUFFERS LOSSES

Prayer
Scripture: Romans 5:15-21
Hymn: 579 "Away in a Manger"

The years 1524-1526 brought separations in the Reformation movement that divided Germany and turned Luther into a party rather than a national leader, throwing him into the arms of the temporal princes.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RADICAL REFORM: Separations began to take place among those who had broken with Rome. Some wanted a more thorough-going Reformation than Luther was preaching. There were defections from Lutheranism and also there arose independent variant forms of Evangelicalism. Luther felt closer to Rome than to the radicals. He declared that he was taking "the middle road."

Carlstadt was stung and humiliated by Luther's Lenten sermons on his return from the Wartburg. Sullenly he continued his lectures at the University of Wittenberg for a short time and then withdrew and dressed like a peasant. He denied the value of education and refused the title "Herr Doktor", insisting that people call him "good neighbor" or "Brother Andreas." He undertook to earn his living at the plow. In September, 1523, he accepted the pastorate of the church at Orlamünde, near Jena. He declined support from the congregation, continuing to earn his living at the plow. He insisted that the minister should be set off in no way from his people. He denounced Dr. Luther and Dr. Eck and declared that the humblest peasant with a Bible in his hand was equal to the greatest doctor. He asked peasants in his congregation to pronounce on weighty theological questions. His writings denouncing education had great influence. Some students even discontinued their work at the university.

Luther did not care for degrees and academic pomp but he did want a trained ministry. If the people listened to Carlstadt soon the preacher would know no more than the peasant. He twitted Carlstadt for his Hebrew quotations in peasant's clothes. To Luther both the dress and the "Brother Andreas" were an affectation and sinful pride in spectacular renunciations. A preacher should not be too good to support himself in necessary, but voluntary withdrawal from parish to farm was an evasion of responsibility. Luther declared he himself sometimes wanted to get away from the cantankerous congregation to look into the friendly eyes of animals.

Carlstadt became more and more radical. He removed the altar and the pictures from the church. Infant baptism was discontinued. Communion was administered in both kinds and without preparation by confession. The organ was removed. He denied the real presence of Christ in the bread and the wine. The bread and wine are mere reminders and not even symbols. When Christ took the bread he pointed to his own body and said, "This is my body which will be broken." He declared that outward physical water is of no efficacy. The essential thing was the experience of religious conviction. He introduced Sabbath keeping to give men relief from mundane tasks for quiet times of cultivation of the inner life. He taught obligatory clerical marriage. He emphasized the Old Testament teachings against idolatry and began to teach that it was the duty of the government to punish idolaters with the sword. Payment of interest on a loan was a sin. More and more he emphasized Old Testament civil and social ordinances. His writings had wide circulation and great influence. Martin Reinhard, pastor at Jena, was won to his cause. Carlstadt established a press in Jena to escape the censorship of Wittenberg.

Luther looked on Carlstadt's program as the introduction of a new legalism with emphasis on externals. When Carlstadt returned to Wittenberg briefly in June, 1524, Luther tried to win him from his eccentricities. Carlstadt soon cut himself off completely from Wittenberg and answered the
call of the congregation and town council of Orlande to resume his pastorate. From his pulpit and in his writings he called for holiness, the renunciation of privilege and social leveling.

The champion of a more radically revolutionary course was Thomas Muenzer, pastor of Allstedt. He was a man of learning, enthusiasm and ability who had come from Zwickau filled with the ideas of the Zwickau prophets who had created such a stir at Wittenberg while Luther was in the Wartburg. He emphasized the cleavage of flesh and spirit, rejecting not only infant baptism, but all baptism. He set the Spirit against the letter of Scripture. He denounced Luther and Eck as champions of a book religion. He preached a religion of the Spirit. Those who relied on the letter of Scripture were like the scribes condemned by Jesus. The men who wrote the Bible had no Bible at the time they wrote. They depended on direct revelation from God. The Bible without a divinely inspired interpreter was inadequate. The divine interpreter is not the Church or pope, but the prophet. He declared himself the new Elijah, the new Daniel, who had the key of David to open the book sealed with seven seals. All should pray for more Eliahs and Daniels. He preached a theocracy of those who had had an inner experience of the Spirit. Those born of the Spirit would recognize each other and should form a covenant of the elect whose mission was to erect God's kingdom. The godless should suffer the ungodly. In the war some of the godly would be killed but suffering and cross bearing was the mark of the elect.

Many outsiders flocked to Alstedt. More than two thousand outsiders swelled his congregation. By 1524 he could boast that he had thirty units ready to slaughter the ungodly. Muenzer denounced Luther as "Dr. Easychair" and "Dr. Pussyfoot." In June, 1524, a mob of his followers burned the chapel at Malderbach destroying a renowned image of the Virgin and many costly relics. In July, 1524, Muenzer preached before Duke John of Saxony and his son, John Frederick, that the godless have no right to live and should be exterminated. All the elect have the prophetic spirit and supernatural revelations. He urged them to recognize him as the new Daniel. The church was a pure virgin until corrupted by those who denied continuous revelation. Without the living witness a man could not know God. Even if one should swallow 100,000 Bibles he would know nothing of God without the inner revelation of the Spirit. His movement represented the fifth monarchy of the vision of Nebuchadnezzar interpreted by Daniel. The true Elijah should slaughter the prophets of Baal--priests and monks who mocked the true gospel of the Spirit should be killed.

The Saxon princes did not appoint Muenzer to the post of the new Daniel. They appointed a commission to investigate. Muenzer did not wait for the report. He fled from Saxony to Muehlhausen in Thuringia. When the town council of Muehlhausen received a warning letter from Luther, Muenzer was ordered out of the city. He wandered over Southwestern Germany and Switzerland exciting the spirit of insurrection.

Luther was horrified at Muenzer's call for violence. He held that his doctrine of continuous revelation destroyed the uniqueness of the Christian revelation. One of Luther's most important works was his treatise, Against the Heavenly Prophets. He also wrote the Saxon princes warning them against the Allstedters who revile the Bible, rave about the Spirit, but do not show the fruits of the Spirit, who destroy churches, and call for slaughter. As long as they confined themselves to preaching they should be tolerated letting the spirits fight it out. But when the sword was drawn the princes must step in to keep the peace. The princes must not sleep.

Prince John Frederick wrote in August, 1524, warning his subordinate against the Satan of Allstedt. He also accused Carlstadt of being the Devil who wanted to be Lord. The sword of God must be used to punish the evil and must be used with energy. The radicals accused Luther of making martyrs.

When the Peasants' War came both Carlstadt and Muenzer and their followers joined the peasants.
THE MILITANT HUMANISTS: Sickingen, Hutten and the knights who had threatened to use force to protect Luther before and at Worms, embarked on a program of raids on territorial princes and bishops to restore the wealth and prestige of German knighthood. Luther denounced their use of force declaring that his cause could only be advanced by preaching the Word and prayer. Had he leaned on the knights he would have been leaning on a broken reed but their threat of using force to protect Luther did increase his boldness. When the knights planned an attack on Richard of Griessenklau, elector and archbishop of Trier, many princes who had been victims of the raids of the knights came to his defense. Sickingen was driven to take refuge in one of his castles where he was wounded by a cannon blast and died. Hutten, who was ill of syphilis, had stayed behind at the Eberburg. He fled to Switzerland where he died. The estates of the defeated knights were confiscated.

THE ATTACK ON LUTHER BY KING HENRY VIII OF ENGLAND: Henry VIII who liked to boast of his attainments in scholastic theology prepared an answer to Luther's The Babylonian Captivity. He called Luther "a devil" and declared him "more pernicious than all Turks, Saracens, and unbelievers." The pope rewarded Henry VIII with the title, "Defender of the Faith," and offered an indulgence of ten years to everyone who would read his attack on Luther. The attack was translated into German with hopes of further injuring Luther's cause. Luther was disappointed for he had hoped England would join the Reformation. Luther in his reply to Henry introduced himself as "minister at Wittenberg by the grace of God." He addressed the king as "Henry, King of England by the disgrace of God." He called Henry a persecutor of God's word and king by God's disgust. Henry wrote the emperor to use fire and sword to extirpate the Lutheran pestilence. He also sent an appeal to Frederick the Wise to call Luther to account. Henry's appeals were fruitless.

CARDINAL CAMPEGGIO AND THE BEGINNING OF COUNTER-REFORMATION:

When Pope Clement VII's legate, Cardinal Campeggio, failed to get the Diet of Nuremberg of January, 1524, to enforce the ban of Worms against Luther, he turned to organizing a counter-reformation. At Regensburg in June, 1524, he gathered an assembly of German princes loyal to the Roman pontiff. Arch-duke Ferdinand of Austria, two dukes of Bavaria, the Archbishop of Salzburg and a large number of bishops of Southern Germany bound themselves to secure the execution of the Edict of Worms. This split Germany into a Roman Catholic camp and a Lutheran camp. Duke George of Saxon forbade anyone in Albertine Saxony to have a Luther Bible. He offered to pay for all copies surrendered. He sent a strong demand to Frederick to arrest Luther and hand him over to the emperor for trial.

The forming of an alliance of Catholic princes helped move a number of German princes to come out openly for Luther. Luther abhorred any threat of armed forces and emphasized preaching the Word. Frederick the Wise showed more sympathy for reform as Spalatin explained Luther's teachings in detail and he continued to protect Luther. At Easter, 1524, Osiander preached against "The Papal Antichrist" and administered communion in both kinds to some thirty or forty of Frederick's retinue and to the sister of the emperor, Isabella, Queen of Denmark, who was visiting in Germany, and who had come out openly for Luther, to the horror of Campeggio and the friends of the pope. Early in 1524, the rulers of Mecklenburg openly declared for the Reformation and asked Luther to send them evangelists. Count Albrecht of Mansfeld and Landgrave Philip of Hesse, son-in-law of Duke George, openly declared their allegiance to Luther's cause. Margrave Albrecht of Brandenburg, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights declared for the Reformation and asked for guidance from Luther. Two Prussian bishops, George von Plenz and Erhard von Quiess joined Albrecht. Luther sent Dr. John Briesmann, Paul Speratus, and John Pflander to evangelize Prussia. Many of the larger German cities joined the Reformation: Nuremberg where Wenceslaus Link, Lawrence
Spengler and Osiander were preachers; Magdeburg with Amsdorf as pastor; Strassburg with Zell, Bucer and Capito preaching; Erhard Schnepf at Wimpfen and Michael Stiefel at Eslingen; at Augsburg Frosh and Urban Regius were preachers; at Bremen, Henry Zetphen was preacher; at Hamburg, Bugenhagen was called to pastor; in Breslau John Hess labored; Riga, Rval and Dorpat also had preachers sent by Luther. Luther also sent preachers to Denmark. Christian II was expelled for Lutheran sympathies but King Frederick his successor openly backed the Reformation. Luther also courted the Bohemians. He had little success with the Ultraquists but won many Bohemian Brethren (Hussites).

ERASMUS AND THE MODERAT HUMANISTS BREAK WITH LUTHER:

One of the most tragic losses that Luther suffered was the break with Erasmus and the moderate humanists. Luther used Erasmus' Greek Testament. He felt indebted to Erasmus for encouraging education, especially for encouraging the ancient languages, and for his satires on the papacy and Rome. Almost from the beginning of Luther's reform the humanists had welcomed him as a champion of liberty. Melanchthon and many of the humanists had openly joined Luther. Luther considered Erasmus cowardly for not openly joining him. Erasmus was offended at Luther's bluntness and lack of tact. Melanchthon and Carlstadt had labored to bring Luther and Erasmus into closer relations. Luther came to feel that he and Erasmus were of different spirits. Luther had come to his position out of a deep religious experience of conversion. Erasmus had had so much experience. Erasmus boasted that he loved peace more than he loved truth. The war between the emperor and France was a blow to his hopes for peace in Europe. Luther had rent the seamless robe of Christ—after Leipzig Erasmus could see that Luther's break with Rome was irreparable. Both sides pressured Erasmus to take a stand. Erasmus wanted to remain neutral, declaring his heart was Catholic but his stomach was Lutheran—he hated fish on Fridays. Those whose favor Erasmus had courted all his life demanded that he attack Luther as the price of continued favor. Three popes, Leo, Adrian, and Clement, all urged him to attack Luther. Emperor, kings, cardinals, archbishops and bishops urged him to declare himself. King Henry VIII from whom Erasmus received a pension, pressured him to come out against Luther. As late as 1524 Erasmus declared in his writings that Luther was not a heretic. Many of the humanists felt that Luther was too medieval and urged Erasmus to break with him. Luther praised Erasmus for leading them away from godless studies by introducing the classical languages but suggested that Erasmus would die in the wilderness of Moab instead of crossing over into the promised land of advanced godliness. He wished that Erasmus would stop commenting on Scripture and attempting to paraphrase it—work for which he was not equal. In 1524 Luther in a letter begged Erasmus not to become an open advocate of abuses he had so severely satanized.

In September, 1524, Erasmus finally openly came out against Luther in his
On the Freedom of the Will. Erasmus chose for his point of attack Luther's doctrine of the complete helplessness of man's will in regaining God's favor and Luther's assertion of the complete sovereignty of God's grace. He avoided matters on which he himself had criticized the papacy.

Luther considered the publication of Erasmus as a personal attack. He was bitterly disappointed. He did thank Erasmus for making the will the point of discussion rather than such trifles as the papacy, indulgences, purgatory and the like. Luther declared that Erasmus had gone to the heart of the matter—his break with the Catholic Church was over the nature and destiny of man.

In December, 1525, Luther published his reply to Erasmus, On the Bondage of the Will. Man is by nature a bondsman of Satan and can be delivered by no native power. Man's will is like a horse upon which either God or Satan rides. Erasmus was primarily interested in morals. Luther questioned whether man's doing right, even if possible, could affect man's fate. Salvation was only by
the grace of God. Erasmus questioned the morality of God creating man incapable of fulfilling the conditions of salvation. Luther insisted natural reason cannot comprehend God's ways. He accused Erasmus of skepticism, levity, and impiety.

The break with Erasmus cost Luther many of the humanists—the better educated people of his age. A few like Melanchthon continued with Luther. Attendance at the university which had begun to decline with Carlstadt's attack on education, now suffered an even greater decline.

Luther's attention was demanded by a much more serious and pressing problem, the Peasants' War.

THE PEASANTS' REVOLT: Restlessness had been growing among the peasants of Europe long before the Reformation. Uprisings had been occurring all over Europe, and especially in Southern Germany, for almost a century. Feudalism had been supplanted by the consolidation of power on a national scale in France, Spain, and England, and on a territorial basis in Germany. The bureaucracy of salaried court officials brought increased taxation that fell heaviest on the peasants. Roman Law replaced local codes. The peasants lost access to common woods, streams, meadows, since Roman Law recognized only private property. Exchange in money replaced exchange in kind. The peasants sank from freeholders to serfs. Not all the peasants were farmers; many were members of guilds in the cities.

In an insurrection in the Netherlands in 1491 the peasants adopted as their symbol the "Bundschuh", the peasants' shoes as contrasted with the boots of the knights and other nobles. Leaders in demands for improved conditions and in the Peasants' War were not those whose lot was poorest, but rather those who had made considerable improvement but who wanted more.

Luther's doctrine of the freedom of the Christian man had fired the imagination of the peasants. Luther became their hero. His blasts against usury pleased the peasants. Luther's attacks on the monasteries was congenial to the peasants who looked with covetous eyes at the holdings of the monasteries. Catholics blamed Luther for increasing restlessness. One Catholic pictured Luther in armor greasing a Bundschuh. Peasants flocked to hear Luther preach.

Astrological speculation seems to have played a part in the growing restlessness. Luther would have nothing to do with astrology but Melanchthon dabbled in it. In 1524 all the planets were in the constellation of the Fish. Twenty years earlier this had been foreseen and great disturbances were predicted. In 1523 over fifty tracts appeared on the subject. The peasants took this up and pictured a big fish on their banners and spread the message that in 1524 the emperor would call a diet and redress their grievances. But 1524 passed with no improvement.

In March, 1525 the peasants published twelve articles or demands:
1) The right of each community to choose and depose its pastor. 2) The Great tithes on the grain should be used to pay the salary of the pastor and other community expenses. 3) The small tithes on the cattle should be abolished. 4) Serfdom should be abolished. 5) Reservations for hunting should be restricted. 6) The poor should be allowed to hunt and gather wood in the forests. 7) Forced labor should be regulated and duly paid. 8) Just rents should be fixed at the beginning of the year. 9) No new laws should be enacted. 10) Common lands should be restored to each community. 11) Inheritance taxes should be abolished. 12) If any of these demands be proved unscriptural they would be withdrawn, or if new wrongs were discovered the right to protest was reserved.

Luther and Melanchthon both gave commentaries on the articles. Luther's name was the first one suggested by the peasants to arbitrate their demands.

Some peasants demanded war and that all rulers abdicate. Some wanted only the pope and the emperor representing the two swords. Luther called for submission to God's word and God's appointed order. Carlstadt and Muentzer
joined the peasants and denounced Luther. War broke out and plunder and pillage were common. In Franconia 200 cloisters and castles were destroyed and there were many murders. Frederick the Wise urged the princes to wait for God to act. As violence spread Luther published his Against the Murderous and Theiving Hordes of Peasants. He denounced the peasants for revolting against constituted authority and called on the princes to butcher the rebellious peasants. Philip of Hesse, Duke George and Duke John of Saxony defeated Muenzer and Pfeiffer and their forces in a bloody battle at Frankenthal on May 15, 1526. Only six hundred were taken prisoners. Over 5,000 were butchered. Muentzer escaped but was later caught, tortured and beheaded.

In the battles that followed it is estimated that over 100,000 peasants were killed. The princes showed little mercy. Bishop Conrad of Muenzberg celebrated a victory with the execution of sixty-four peasants and then took his executioner rounded up 272 more in his diocese.

The peasants felt they had been betrayed by Luther. Some went back to the Catholic church. Some joined the spreading Anabaptists who were taking root in Germany.

For the princes Luther was the symbol of law and order. The Lutheran church became more than ever a state church of the princes and upper class. However, the peasants who listened to Luther preach in his own church continued loyal to him. The loss of the great mass of the peasants was a tragic loss. Luther himself became more fearful of chaos and disorder.

The Catholics blamed Luther for all the war and unrest. It was the logical and natural outcome of breaking with the pope.