

The Wittenberg Times

1526-1550



All the news that's fit to print with some editorializing by Martin Luther
Editor: Hank Bitten

1528 - Melanchthon Proposes Educational Reforms in the Empire

Philip Melanchthon published *Unterricht Der Visitatoren* (Instructions for Visitors) advancing the importance of a liberal arts education in studying the societies of the past to improve life in the Holy Roman Empire. In his publication he integrated the importance of faith and biblical truths with the secular teachings of balance, simplicity, harmony, beauty and truth. Melanchthon initiated municipal or public schools in the German provinces.

Melanchthon was the first person to argue for the education of all people and not just the clergy. His educational reforms provided education for girls and the poor. Melanchthon's contributions included textbooks based on biblical teachings, the natural sciences, history, and law. In addition to starting primary and secondary schools, his influence extended to the university.

In just the first week that his reforms were made public, he has received requests from 56 cities to start public schools.

His skill in using education to change behavior is revolutionary in the manner he integrates faith with secular humanism. Melanchthon opened the University of Marburg last year and is currently on the Board of Directors for starting universities in Jena and Koenigsberg.

Martin Luther commended him as the "Schoolmaster of Germany!" Luther also said that teachers are likely to have as much of an influence on spreading God's Word to the people as the clergy.

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1528 - Severe Outbreak of the Plague in England

The third outbreak of the malady that has been called the "sweating sickness" is killing half of the male population in London, Cambridge, and Oxford. The disease begins suddenly with a headache, sharp pains in the neck and shoulders. This last for about three hours and is followed by a sweat, severe thirst, heart palpitations and difficulty with breathing. It is a very painful disease and death comes quickly within one or two days.

The disease affects the rich and Arthur, heir to the Tudor throne of England died in 1509, within a few months of his celebrated marriage to Catherine of Spain. Although the cause of this plague remains unknown, some physicians think it may be related to the open sewers and carried by lice or fleas. The disease appears to occur only in the summer and disappears with colder temperatures.

Thomas Forestier has made this observation: *"The exterior is calm in this fever, the interior excited... the heat in the pestilent fever many times does not appear excessive to the doctor, nor the heat of the sweat itself particularly high... But it is on account of the ill-natured, fetid, corrupt, putrid, and loathsome vapors close to the region of the heart and of the lungs whereby the panting of the breath magnifies and increases and restricts of itself..."*

Martin Luther offered prayers this past Sunday for the more than one thousand people, mostly men who died in Hamburg. The plague has been violent in Lithuania, Denmark, and Antwerp.

Children do not appear to be affected by this disease and only a few women are reporting symptoms. The disease appears to mostly attack men between the ages of 30-45.

Anne Boleyn has contracted the illness from someone in her family. The English physician, John Caius reported that she is under quarantine and is likely to make a full recovery. Her suitor, King Henry VIII has been moved to a safe house in Kent. There is no cure for the sweating sickness.

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1528 - Henry VIII Seeks Divorce

The news of King Henry VIII's request to the pope for an annulment to his marriage to Catherine shocked all of Europe. Catherine was the youngest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella from Spain and the aunt of Charles V, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Catherine was almost 16 when she married Henry's older brother, Arthur, on Nov. 14, 1501 in St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

Catherine was widowed at the age of 16, barely six months after her wedding, when Arthur suddenly died of the sweating sickness, likely a hantavirus. To protect the dowry, a papal dispensation was granted on the basis that Catherine was still a virgin as the marriage had not been consummated. Henry VIII and Catherine were married on June 11, 1509 in Greenwich. Prince Henry, the future heir, was born on January 1, 1511 but died two months later.

After carnal relations with Elizabeth Blount and Mary Boleyn for several years, King Henry VIII fell in love with Anne Boleyn, Mary's younger sister. He requested an annulment from Cardinal Woosley on the basis of the Old Testament law stated in Leviticus 20:16, ***"If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an impurity; he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless."***

Although the teachings of the reformer Martin Luther stated that our allegiance was to God and not to the pope, a survey of people in Wittenberg were sympathetic to Catherine and opposed Henry's request. At the time of Luther's protest against the Roman Catholic Church, King Henry VIII received the honorable title of *Defender of the Faith* by Pope Leo X.

In an interview with Thomas Cromwell we were informed that the matter was being reviewed by Pope Clement VII, who just returned to Rome after the destruction of the city by the army of Charles V. Mr. Cromwell admitted that the timing of this request is unfortunate as Rome is still in ruins after the attack. Mr. Cromwell added that King Henry was childless with the untimely death of his infant son and understood this as a sign that his marriage to Catherine should not have been granted by the Church.

Martin Luther, recently married to a former nun, commented that marriage is a sacred promise of a man and woman before God and that lust and adultery are sinful. But, God forgives sinners who repent and seek His help.

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1528 - Knox Spreads Reformation Ideas to Scotland

Yesterday, Patrick Hamilton, a student who graduated from the University of Wittenberg, was burned at the stake outside of St. Salvator's College in St. Andrews. Hamilton is the first Protestant martyr in Scotland. He was executed for teaching the doctrine of justification by faith using the small catechism he wrote, ***Patrick's Places***. The Parliament of Scotland officially banned all of Luther's books, especially his translation of the New Testament. Maister Patrick Hamilton had met with Martin Luther last year and was accused of bringing his books into Scotland. His trial took less than 12 hours. His last words were, "*How long, O Lord shall darkness cover this realm? How long will you suffer this tyranny of men? Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!*"

The public was outraged and strongly criticized the Archbishop of St. Andrews for burning Patrick Hamilton at the stake. The *St. Andrews Gazette* had an editorial condemning the public execution by writing, "*the reek of smoke of Maister Patrik Hammyltoun has infected as many as it blew upon.*"

John Knox was training to be a Roman Catholic priest in Scotland at the time of Patrick Hamilton's execution. The teachings of Martin Luther inspired the university students at St. Andrews in wanting to learn more about God's grace and the true meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

John Knox publicly challenged the sermon of Dean John Annand when he referred to the Roman Catholic Church as the "bride of Christ." Knox interrupted him from the pew and declared that "*the Roman church was no bride but a prostitute.*" He was influenced by the distinction between law and gospel and Luther's teachings about faith. In an interview with Maister Knox after the worship, he told our reporter that the Roman Church had drifted further from the faith than the Jews had from Moses when they crucified Jesus Christ.

As a result of the power of printed materials, ***Patrick's Places*** spread throughout Scotland. Patrick's sister Katherine was also influential in continuing her brother's teachings on faith until her house arrest.

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1528 - Augsburg Merchants Colonize Venezuela

The influential Welser banking family launched *Klein Venedig* (Little Venice) today based on the colonial charter received from Charles 1 of Spain several years ago for unpaid debts. Ambrosius Ehinger led the capitalist venture in search for the legendary city of gold, El Dorado, with 50 German miners.

Plans for this port city and mining expeditions include the forced migration of up to 4,000 African slaves as the natives appear hostile to the settlement. The colonial settlement also includes plans for the export of sugar cane to Hamburg.

Initial reports of finding 70,000 pesos of gold cannot be verified as the gold has not been inventoried or shipped to Germany. One report has the mining expedition lost in the forest and unable to find *Klein Venedig*.