

COMPARING LUTHER'S *ENFLAMED DIALOGUE*
WITH TYNDALE'S *PRAYER OF THE SINNER*

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Below is a very convicting work from the pen of Protestant Reformer Martin Luther, written in 1519. It is paralleled with its 1526 translation and adaptation by William Tyndale. Luther took a common religious ritual in his day, the saying of the Lord's Prayer, and added to it God's response to the seven petitions of the prayer from Scripture. He contextualized a variety of biblical texts and applied them to the person who may recite the Lord's Prayer with a spirit of indifference. The result is a very convicting text.

Luther considered that the Lord's Prayer emphasized "the Law." Therefore, he applied the tutelage of this "Law" to bring the reader of the prayer to see himself as a sinner in need of Christ's forgiveness. Luther referred to his reader praying the prayer as "the Soul." Tyndale, for his part, used as the title "Sinner" for the person praying the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Both men included this prayer as part of their commentary on the Book of Romans. It is likely that they both considered this *Enflamed Dialogue* as a worthy response to the message of justification by faith in Romans. Perhaps they sought to exemplify what is meant by "calling upon the name of the Lord to be saved" (Rom 10:13).

Luther's "Lord's Prayer" was translated into French in 1519, the same year it appeared in Germany. The original translator gave it the name "Enflamed Dialogue." Then Marguerite, Duchesse of Angoulême, and sister of the King of France, put this prayer into verse giving it both elegance and cultural prominence.

In a very powerful way Luther's *Enflamed Dialogue* took what were to become the great doctrines of the Protestant Reformation and applied them in the form of a prayer. In that way, the readers would be guided to pray biblical words of conviction and confession "from their heart" (Rom 10:6, 8). Could it not be that this very prayer was instrumental in bringing a large wave of persons to "call on the name of the Lord to be saved" in the early 1520's? For example, this author has wondered about the actual time of conversion of the Anabaptist Balthasar Hubmaier. Was it possible that Luther's "Lord's Prayer" was a topic of a discussion when Hubmaier visited the house of Hans Blabhaus in Regensburg for "evangelical meetings" in 1522? If so, is it not possible that heartfelt prayer could follow such a discussion? While based on conjecture due to the lack of sources on this topic, the availability and distribution of such a prayer could provide a definitive point at which Hubmaier turned from his Catholic ministry at Beateous Mary, leaving Regensburg in order to pastor and lead a gospel-revival in the city of Waldshut.

As for the French, despite waves of intense persecution, Protestantism became a strong force in France. Could it not be that the *Enflamed Dialogue*, put in verse by the King's sister, burned in the hearts of some throughout France as their country was evangelized? Would it not follow that such a prayer would lead to a rich harvest of souls? It was reported that there were "well over a hundred thousand" French Protestants before the "First War of Religion" of 1562 and many more by the Saint Bartholomew Massacre of 1572.

As for its English language usage, Luther's *Enflamed Dialogue* was translated into English and revised by William Tyndale in 1526. He appended it to the preface of his translation of the Book of Romans. Sadly, Tyndale's *Prayer of the Sinner* was locked into his 1526 edition, never to be included in any subsequent compilations or later republications of Tyndale's writings. Amazingly, Tyndale's *Prayer of the Sinner* remained unknown and unstudied until Malcolm Yarnell found it and published it 478 years later in 2004.

In his introduction to the prayer, Yarnell explained how he providentially came upon it:

While reading through the original documents collected en masse at the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, this author

was concerned to discover Tyndale's doctrine of royal priesthood, especially as evidenced in his biblical commentaries. Having finished a thorough reading of Tyndale's preface to Paul's book of Romans, an unexpected document was found appended to that preface. This was a surprise because both of the authoritative editions of the collected works of Tyndale, which had been previously consulted, neglected to reprint the document.

For this present author, a student told me about Yarnell's article on *Prayer of the Sinner* in 2013. Later, after reading Yarnell's article, I noticed a French book in my home library titled, *La Substance de l'Évangile de Luther* ["The Substance of the Gospel of Luther"]. I had acquired this book as part of my inheritance from my late father's library. When I looked in the table of contents, sure enough, there was a section titled "The Lord's Prayer" [*L'Oraison Dominicale*]. It was a French translation of Luther's 1519 *Enflamed Dialogue*, and was very similar to Tyndale's *Prayer of the Sinner*.

Therefore below please find my English translation of Luther's 1519 *Enflamed Dialogue* as published in French from Strasbourg. Then following Luther is Tyndale's adaptation of this prayer in English. The original French and the original English are provided in footnotes. The form of the prayer is an antiphonal dialogue between the Soul's entreaty and God's response. It comprises the seven entreaties of the Lord's Prayer, as found in Matthew 6:9-13, concluding with several sentences on faith and God's assistance.

Opening Address

[Luther] The Soul. Oh our Father, who is in heaven, we are your children, on earth, separated from you, in great misery. What a great distance there is between you and us; how can we return to you and to our motherland?

[Tyndale] The Sinner. Our Father which are in heaven, what a great space is between you and us. How therefore shall we, your children, here on

earth, banished and exiled in this vale of misery and wretchedness, come home to you in our natural country?

God's Response

[Luther] God. "A child honors his father and a servant his master." If I am your father, where is the honor that you owe me? If I am your Lord, do you fear me and do you respect me? For my holy name is blasphemed and dishonored among you and by you (Isa. 52).

[Tyndale] God. The child honors his own father, and the servant his master. If I be your father, where is my honor? If I be your Lord, where is my fear? (Mal. 1). For my name through you and by your means is blasphemed, railed upon, and evil spoken (Isa. 52).

First Entreaty

[Luther] The Soul. Oh Father, that is only all too true. We recognize our sin. Be a gracious father and do not take into account our sins, but give us your grace in order that we may live in such a way that your name would be sanctified in us. Hinder us from thinking, saying, doing, having or from proposing to ourselves that which would not contribute to your praise and to your glory, in order that we may diligently seek before all else the glory of your name and not at all our vain glory. Make us love you as children love, fear, and respect their father.

[Tyndale] The Sinner. Alas, our Father that is truth. We acknowledge our sin and trespass. Nevertheless, please be a merciful Father, and do not deal with us according to what we deserve, neither judge us by the rigors of your Law, but give us grace that we may so live, that your name may be hallowed and sanctified in us. And keep our hearts that we neither do nor speak, no, that we not once think or purpose anything, but that which is to your honor and praise. And above all things, make your name and honor be sought of us and not our name and vain glory. And by your mighty power bring to pass in us—that we may love and fear you as a son his Father.

God's Response

[Luther] God. Isaiah 2, Genesis 8. How can my honor and my name be sanctified among you, when your thoughts and hearts are so entirely inclined to evil and in the bonds of sin? And moreover no one can sing my praise in a strange land (Psa. 137).

[Tyndale] God. How can my honor and name be hallowed among you, when your hearts and thoughts are always inclined to evil? And you are in bondage and captivity under sin? Moreover, seeing that no man can sing my laud and praise in a strange country (Psa. 136 [137]).

Second Entreaty

[Luther] The Soul. Oh Father, it is true, we recognize that all our members are inclined to evil and that the world, the flesh, and the devil want to reign in us and chase away your honor and your name. That is why we beseech you, deliver us from that misery, establish your reign, in order that sin would be expelled and that we may be rendered holy, in order that you alone reign in us and that we become your kingdom by placing at your service all the strength of our souls and bodies.

[Tyndale] The Sinner. O Father, that is truth. We feel our members, yea and also our very hearts prone and ready to sin, and that the world, the flesh, and the devil rule in us, and expel the due honor of your holy name. Wherefore we beseech you most merciful Father, for the love that you have unto your Son, help us out of this miserable bondage, and thy kingdom come, to drive out the sin, to loose the bonds of Satan, to tame the flesh, to make us righteous and perfect, and to cleave unto you. That you alone may reign in us, and that we may be your kingdom and possession, and that we obey you with all our power and strength, both within and without.

God's Response

[Luther] God. Deut. 32. I destroy he whom I want to help and I kill them, I render poor, bring to naught, him who I want to bring to life, to salvation, and whom I want to render rich and holy. But you do not accept that I think and act in this way (Psa. 77). How then can I help you? What more can I do for you? (Isa. 5).

[Tyndale] God. Whom I help, them I destroy. And whom I make living, safe, rich, and good, them I will condemn and cast them away, make them beggars and bring them to naught. But so to be cured by me will you not suffer? (Psa. 77) How then shall I heal you, yea, and what shall I do more? (Isa. 5).

Third Entreaty

[Luther] The Soul. We regret that we have not understood nor accepted that which your salvific hand wanted to do for us. O Father, give us your grace and your help that we may allow you to work your divine will in us. And if it hurts us, continue, correct, cut out, strike, burn. Always do what you want, in order that only your will be done and not ours. Do not suffer, dear Father, that we undertake or accomplish anything according to our ideas, our will. For our will and your will are contrary; yours is only good, even though it does not always seem to be so, and ours is bad, even though it sometimes has a beautiful appearance.

[Tyndale] The Sinner. That is to us great sorrow and grief, that we can neither understand nor suffer your wholesome hand. Wherefore, help dear Father, open our eyes, and work patience in us, that we may understand your wholesome hand. And also patiently suffer your godly will to be fulfilled in us. Furthermore, though this most wholesome cure be ever so painful to us; yet go forward with it—punish, beat, cut, burn, destroy, bring to naught, damn, cast into hell, and do whatever you will—that your will may be fulfilled and not ours. Forbid, dear Father, and in no wise suffer us to follow our own thoughts and imaginations, neither to execute our own will, meaning, and purpose. For your will and ours are clean contrary to one another. Yours is only good, though it appears otherwise to our blind reason; and ours evil, though [in] our blindness [we] see it not.

God's Response

[Luther] God, Psalm 77. It has happened quite often that they love me with their lips and that their heart is far from me. And when I make an effort to correct them, they flee and elude my action, as you read in Psalm 77, "They were converted in the day of battle." They started well so that I decided to take care of them, but then they turned back and relapsed into their sin to my dishonor.

[Tyndale] God. I am well served and dealt with all, that men love me with their lips and their hearts are far from me. And when I take them in hand, so to make them better, and to help them, then they run backward, and in the midst of their curing, while their health is working, they withdraw from me, as you read in Psalm 77 (Lat. *conversi sunt in die belli*). They are turned back in the day of battle. That is to say, they which began well and committed themselves unto me, that I should take them in hand and cure them, are gone back from me in time of temptation and killing of the flesh, and are returned to sin and unto dishonoring of me again.

Fourth Entreaty

[Luther] The Soul. Alas, Father, that is true. No man is strong in and of himself (1 Kings 2). Who could subsist before you, if you do not strengthen us and you yourself do not console us? That is why, dear Father, spur us on, accomplish your will in order that we may become your kingdom, to your honor and your glory. But, dear Father, give us your strength in this matter by your holy word, give us our daily bread. Print on our hearts the image of your dear son Jesus Christ who is the true bread from heaven, in order that, strengthened by him, we may accept and joyfully support that our will be thwarted and destroyed and that your will may be accomplished. Grant also your grace to all Christianity, send us instructed priests and preachers who will not teach vain fables, but your holy Gospel and Jesus Christ.

[Tyndale] The Sinner. O Father it is true. No man can be strong in his own strength—in the second chapter of the First of the Kings. Yea and who are able to suffer and abide before your hand, if you yourself do not strength and comfort us? Wherefore, most merciful Father, take us unto your cure, fulfill your will in us that we may be your kingdom and your inheritance, unto you laud and praise. Also, dear Father, strengthen and

comfort us in such business with your Holy Word. Give us our daily bread. Engrave and print your Son Jesus in our hearts, that we, strengthened through him may cheerfully and gladly suffer and endure the destroying and killing of our will, and the fulfilling of your will. Yea, and shed out your grace upon all Christianity and send priests and preachers, to teach us your Son purely. And feed us with the word of your Holy Gospel, and not with the dregs and chaff of fables and men's doctrine.

God's Response

[Luther] God. Jeremiah 5 and elsewhere. It is not good to give to dogs holy things and the bread of children. You sin daily, and while I want you to preach day and night, you do not listen and my word is despised.

[Tyndale] God. It is not good to cast pearls before swine, neither to give holy things and the children's bread to the dogs and hounds. You sin continuously without ceasing, and though I let my word be preached among you ever so much, yet you follow it not, neither obey, but despise it.

Fifth Entreaty

[Luther] The Soul. Oh Father, have mercy and do not refuse us daily bread. We regret that we have not appreciated your holy word and we ask you to have patience with your poor children. Forgive us this sin. Do not judge us, for no one can be considered righteous by you. Take into account only your promise, in order that we may forgive those who have trespassed against us, because you have promised your forgiveness. Not that we merit your forgiveness because of our forgiveness. But you are true and you have promised in your grace to forgive all those who forgive their neighbors. We place our confidence in your promise.

[Tyndale] The Sinner. O Father, have mercy on us, and deny us not that bread of love. It grieves us much, even at the very root of our hearts, that we cannot satisfy your word and follow it. We desire you therefore to have patience with us, your poor and wretched children. And forgive us our trespass and guilt. And judge us not according to your Law. For no

man is righteous in your presence. Look on your promises, we forgive our trespassers, and that with all of our hearts, and unto such hasten your promised forgiveness. Not that we through such forgiveness are worthy of forgiveness, but that you are true, and of your gracious mercy hast promised forgiveness unto all them that forgive their neighbors. In this promise is all our hope and trust.

God's Response

[Luther] God, Psalm 77. Very often I forgive and I deliver, and you do not persevere. You are people of little faith. You do not know how to watch and persevere with me, you very quickly relapse into temptation (Matt. 26).

[Tyndale] God. I forgive you often, and you never abide steadfast. Children of little faith are you! You cannot watch and endure with me a little while. But once again fall into temptation, Matt. 26.

Sixth Entreaty

[Luther] The Soul. We are weak and sickly, oh Father, and the assaults of the flesh and of the world are strong and varied. Oh dear Father, uphold us and do not allow us to fall into temptation and relapse into sin, but give us thy grace in order that we may persevere and fight valiantly up until our end. For without your grace and your help we can do nothing.

[Tyndale] The Sinner. Weak are we, O Father, and feeble. And the temptation [is] great and manifold, in the flesh and in the world. Keep us, Father, with your mighty power, and let us not fall into temptation and sin again. But give us grace that we may abide standing, and fight manfully unto the end, for without your grace we can do nothing.

God's Response

[Luther] God, Psalm 2. I am righteous, and upright is my judgment. That is why sin cannot remain unpunished. And it is necessary that you endure

affliction. That you may suffer by it is a consequence of your sin that requires me to punish it and shackle it.

[Tyndale] God. I am righteous and my judgment is right. And therefore sin may not go unpunished. Yea, and you must suffer evil and affliction, and as doubtful that you have temptation thereby, that is only your sins fault, which compels me thereunto, to kill it and to heal you. For sin can with no other medicine be drawn out of you, but through adversity and suffering of evil.

Seventh Entreaty

[Luther] The Soul. Because hardship is for us a temptation and threatens to cause us to fall into sin, deliver us from it, dear Father, in order that, liberated from all sins and from all hardships by your divine will, we may become your kingdom and we may praise you, may glorify you, and may sanctify you eternally. Amen.

[Tyndale] The Sinner. For as much then as adversity, tribulation, affliction, and evil, which fight against sin, give us temptation, deliver us out of them. Finish your cure and make us thoroughly whole. That we, loosed from sin and evil, may be unto you a kingdom, to laud, to praise, and to sanctify you. Amen.

Concluding Comments

[Luther] As you taught and commanded us and you have promised to answer us, we hope and we are assured, very dear Father, that in order to do honor to your truthful word, you will give us all this by your grace and by your mercy.

If someone would ask, lastly: "What can I do if I cannot believe that I will be answered?" Answer: Do as the father of the possessed (Mark 9). When Christ told him: "Are you able to believe? All things are possible for him who has faith," this father cried out with tears: "Lord, I believe, come to the aid of my faith if it is too weak."

To God be honor and glory.

[Tyndale] And seeing that you have taught us to pray in this way, and have also promised to hear us, we hope and are sure that you will graciously and mercifully grant us our petitions, for your truth's sake, and to the honoring of your truth. Amen.

Finally, some man will possibly say: "What if I cannot believe in my heart that my prayer is heard?" I answer: "Then do as the father of the possessed did in the 9th of Mark, when Christ said unto him, 'If you could believe, all things are possible unto him that believes.'" The father answered, "I believe, help mine unbelief." That is to say, heal mine unbelief and give me perfect belief and strengthen the weakness of my faith and increase it.

CONCLUSION

Is not the power of this prayer is in its antiphonal dialogue between God and man? The reader is brought through the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, God withholding each request one at a time. Then in the conclusion, the script turns a corner when Luther, followed by Tyndale, helps the person who is weak in the faith. The person who considers himself hopelessly lost finds hope through the statement of the father of the possessed boy, "help my unbelief." There is a God in heaven who hears the helpless sinner's heart cry out for mercy! What an amazing approach to the Lord's Prayer, turning it into a "Prayer of the Sinner."