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**Editor's Notes**

*Leonard W. Pine, Editor*

***Chandeliers and Porch Lights***

Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., used to speak of God's calling and anointing upon His people in terms of light fixtures in old Southern mansions. In God's providence He supplies the Church with brilliant chandeliers in the foyer that welcome guests into the home. The beauty of the chandelier sets the tone for what the guests may expect from the rest of residence.

The chandeliers of the Reformation were Luther, Calvin, Knox, and Zwingli: men who, on account of the brilliance of their scholarship and personality, opened the doors of Protestantism to the world. Their luminence continues to light the way for many even to this day, and it is understandable that they should attract most of our attention.

But chandeliers in the foyer cannot keep one from tripping on the back porch. Those back porch lights, along with the lights in the hallways and other rooms, are equally important. They may or may not be eye-catching, but we could not do without them. Just so with "the other Reformers." We may pay them little attention, but they are the ones that guide us through the maze of rediscovered theology revealed through the Reformation.

We can only sketch out the lives and contributions of a few of these faithful ones here. We hope this glimpse of the other Reformers will encourage *you* to be faithful, whether you are a chandelier or a porch light in God's providence. *Soli Gloria Deo!*

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heart is cold, who would think for a moment of weighing such things in the balance against the priceless blessing of a nation's liberties.

If there was fire in the person of Andrew Melville, there was also that kindness which is the fruit of the Spirit. McCrie tells us that, when one of the men of rank who had been one of Melville's most violent enemies was reduced to poverty, Andrew forgave him for the wrongs he had suffered from him and "supported him for some months out of his own purse." In the nearly thirty years of his unceasing activity in behalf of his nation and the Church of Scotland, Melville served with never failing courage. Illustrative of that courage is a scene involving one of Scotland's regents. A few years after his return to Scotland, the Regent Morton said to Melville, "There will never be quietness in this country till half-a-dozen of you be hanged or banished." Melville replied, "Tush, Sir, to threaten your courtiers after that manner. It is the same to me whether I rot in the air or in the ground. The earth is the Lord's. My country is wherever goodness is."

Wylie pays the highest tribute to Melville when he says, "...the public liberties as well as the Protestantism of Scotland would have perished but for the vigilance and intrepidity of the Presbyterian ministers, and, above all, the incorruptible, the dauntless and unflinching courage and patriotism of Andrew

Melville."

We of this nation owe men of the faith and courage of Melville an immense debt. Nineteenth century American Presbyterian David Breed in his little book, *Presbyterians and the Revolution*, documents that it was the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who were in the forefront of the struggles which freed colonial America from the tyranny of King George and gave us the legacy of civil and ecclesiastical liberty which are asserted in the "Declaration of Independence" and guaranteed in the Constitution's "Bill of Rights." One such contributor was Scotland's own John Witherspoon, who came to this country to be the president of the College of New Jersey and was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Reading of the life of Andrew Melville, his incessant labors, his sacrifices, his sufferings, one thinks of the line from the epistle to the Hebrews, "of whom the world was not worthy." 



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Melville, beginning with the church's General Assembly in 1575.

Melville's activities with reference to the introduction of the episcopacy via the tulchan bishop arrangement was not simply negative. Constructively, he led in the church's preparation of a *Second Book of Discipline*, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1581 and which would be ratified by the Parliament in 1592. *The First Book of Discipline* had been rather hastily prepared; more deliberation was given to the preparations of the *Second Book*. W.M. Hetherington, commenting on the *Second Book* in his *History of the Church of Scotland* says:

It begins by stating the essential line of distinction between civil and ecclesiastical power. This it does by declaring that Jesus Christ has appointed a government in his Church, distinct from civil government, which is to be exercised by such office-bearers as He has authorized, and not by civil magistrates, or under their direction.

In the *Second Book of Discipline*, as again noted by Hetherington, "The name 'bishop' is of the same meaning as that of pastor or minister; it is not expressive of superiority or lordship; and the Scriptures do not allow of a pastor of pastors, or a pastor of many flocks." In his *Life of Andrew Melville*, McCrie says with respect to Melville's part in the preparation of the *Second Book of Discipline*, "he regarded his exertions in this cause as the greatest service which

he could perform for his country...." Another insight we have into the principles for which Melville stood comes in that meeting with King James the VI in which he called him "God's sillie vassal." What he said on that occasion was in part as follows:

Sir...there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is Christ Jesus the King of the Church, whose subject King James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member...We will yield to you your place, and give you all due obedience; but again I say, you are not the head of the Church; you cannot give us that eternal life which even in this world we seek for, and you cannot deprive us of it. Permit us then freely to meet in the name of Christ, and to attend the interests of that Church....

Melville's leadership in the cause of civil and ecclesiastical liberty was eventually to see him unjustly imprisoned in the Tower of London. After four years of confinement, he was banished to France, where he lived out the last days of his seventy-seven years.

#### A HERITAGE OF COURAGE

We have managed only a glimpse of Andrew Melville. He was ardent of spirit. Wylie says of him and others of his nation and era:

These men may have been rough in speech; they may have permitted their temper to be ruffled, and their indignation to be set on fire, in exposing craft and withstanding tyranny; but that man's understanding must be as narrow as his

## KEYNOTE

### THE OTHER REFORMERS: HIDDEN LIGHTS IN GOD'S KINGDOM

by John Battle

When we think of the Protestant Reformation, the names of Luther, Calvin, and Knox immediately come to mind. These men lived exciting lives, filled with drama and danger. Their names were on everyone's tongues. They were the leaders people all over Europe looked to. They faced the power of the Roman Catholic establishment with courage and perseverance, and established new churches, true to biblical teaching. They rightfully are honored by all succeeding generations of Protestants.

We might ask, "Why were these men so influential and successful in bringing reformation to the church?" Of course, we recognize that God had ordained to use them to bring this Reformation, but he does employ means. God prepared these men, just as he prepared the circumstances in which they lived. I believe there are several factors which came together in their lives; here are some of them: First, they were highly spiritual men, filled with a burning awareness of God's sovereignty, holiness, and grace; they by faith saw the face of God, and thus feared no man. Second, they were Christian men, that is, they knew the saving grace of Jesus Christ in their own lives; they had accepted him as their Savior and Lord, and were profoundly

aware of and grateful for their salvation from sin and God's wrath. Third, they were gifted men; they possessed extraordinary abilities in scholarship, speaking, and writing. Fourth, they were diligent men; they worked tirelessly, persevering through many years, providing determined leadership to the Reformation. Fifth, they were courageous men; all of them faced the threat of persecution and death for their beliefs and work, yet they did not flinch or soften their stand. Sixth, by God's providence they were right for their times; the circumstances of their own spiritual understanding and growth matched their culture—they rode the crest of the wave of reformation.

This last point causes us to consider "the other reformers." Luther, Calvin, and Knox did not act alone. They appeared in history at the apex of a great spiritual and social movement that was sweeping Europe. Underneath them surged powerful forces of change, the lives and labors of thousands of other people. In American football you may see a running back make a spectacular run down the field. The announcers and all the crowd will cheer him wildly. Yet that great run was possible only because of the coordinated effort and sacrifice of the entire team; players on the front line strove valiantly and even painfully to open the gap for the runner, while

others blocked or distracted the opposing team members. Truly the glory for that exciting run should be shared, although usually the other players are ignored. In the same way, while we thank God for the leaders of the Reformation, let us remember and praise God for the countless “other reformers” who, under God, enabled those leaders to succeed. It is good for us to consider these other reformers. Many of them made particular contributions to the Reformation which we need to think about. God is always reforming his church; and he may use us in a particular way that we have not considered before. By studying these other reformers, possibilities for our own service to God will spring into our minds. Studying these reformers also leads us to humility. “Seek not great things for yourself,” the Lord told Baruch of old. We need not be famous to help the Lord's cause. There are many more in the second and lower ranks than in the first rank, yet the same effort and sacrifice are required, and the same reward will be given by Christ.

### **THOSE WHO TOOK THEIR STAND**

At the base of the Reformation were the countless thousands of people who trusted in Christ alone for salvation, and who broke with Rome to follow biblical teaching. The Lord alone knows the names of these saints. Each of them had to come to grips with his personal sin, his false faith in works or the

church of Rome, his need to trust in the righteousness of Christ alone. The true gospel does not appeal to the flesh, to the pride of man. Man cannot earn his salvation, no matter how holy or zealous his life may appear to be. Each of us must confess his total sinfulness and unworthiness, and cling to Christ alone by faith. This is God's work in the heart.

For many, the break with Rome must have caused anguish of spirit, fear of reprisal, loss of family and friends, and the hostility of society. They would find no comfort with their priest. The new Protestant ministers were outcasts also, despised by the official church; who could feel safety and comfort with them?

Yet God took them up. “Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me” (Ps. 27:10; quotes in this article from the NIV). “‘Therefore come out from them and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty’” (2 Cor. 6:17-18). God gave tremendous grace to these Reformation believers. They filled the Protestant churches, supported and encouraged their faithful preachers, defended their families and churches in the religious wars, reared youngsters who loved the Bible and the cause of Reformation. Their testimonies, more than those of the leaders, brought thousands of more converts into the Protestant churches.

gave himself to further studies in the languages, taught in the Academy and was associated with Theodore Beza, who was the successor of John Calvin. Two years after the death of Knox (1574), Melville, at the urging of his own countrymen, returned to his homeland where he became principal of the University of Glasgow. There he introduced a new method of education. It was the established practice in all universities at that time for the regent who began a class to continue with it and conduct his students through the whole course of studies for four years. Melville abolished this practice; instead, each regent became a teacher in one or two subjects, thus specializing in their fields of expertise.

Six years later he left the University of Glasgow to become the Principal of the University of St. Andrews at Edinburgh. His fame in both institutions spread and brought students flocking to them. Even in his years of study on the continent, Melville had taken an interest in the fortunes of his homeland. So when he was back in Scotland he added to his teaching labors his endeavors for the welfare of the church and nation. From the multitude of his labors, we select a few in which he was involved, which show the heart and mind of the man.

The first major contention in which Melville earned recognition as a leader in the reformation cause was over the

tulchan bishops. The year 1560 had seen the Scottish parliament, sympathetic at that point with Knox's reforms, “rescind the laws in favor of the Romish church and against the Protestant faith.” As of that date, however, the Reformation was not to go unchallenged. The head of the nation changed from one who was favorable to the Reformation, to one who was unfavorable. Dissentions broke out between the Scottish court and the church. A new Regent, Earl of Morton, arranged a meeting between a few ministers and his court. The design and fruit of this meeting was an arrangement whereby benefices (church offices endowed with assets that provided a living) would be occupied by Protestant ministers (often the least worthy of men), only they would have the title of bishop. Under this arrangement, the ministers would have a small part of the revenue attached to the benefices and the vast portion of it would go to the nobility. The ministers who were to occupy this position were called tulchan bishops—the word “tulchan” being the name given a cowhide stuffed with straw which, serving the place of a calf, was placed before the cow to induce them to give their milk. “The bishop,” said one, “had the title, but my lord got the milk or commoditie.” To some, that arrangement might have seemed harmless enough. To Melville and the church as a whole it was not. As Knox had opposed the arrangement as “an invasion of Presbyterian equality” so did

ruler, each would have bowed the church to its own laws for the sake of glory, power and wealth.

In contrast, Knox maintained

...the church was governed solely by her own laws [agreeable to the Scriptures] or administered by her own officers, whose decisions and acts in all things falling within the spiritual and ecclesiastical sphere were final.

According to Wylie, "An independent government in things spiritual, but rigidly restricted to things spiritual, was the root idea of Knox's church organization." When Melville returned home to Scotland two years after the death of Knox, his struggle against the same basic enemies would parallel those of his predecessor.

The labors which Knox and his successor Melville bestowed on behalf of civil and ecclesiastical liberty was rooted in their understanding of spiritual liberty as revealed in the Bible. The Scotland to which Knox preached was generally sunk in sin and superstition. The great burden of Knox, and thereafter of Melville, was that men should have the advantages of the pure gospel. Those two men were the instruments by whom Christ brought "deliverance to the captives and set at liberty them that are bruised." We refer again to Wylie's *History of Protestantism* in which he says, "The Reformation was the cry of the human conscience for pardon...The gospel which showed the way of forgiveness delivered men from bondage and imparting a new life, brought them into a world

of liberty."

As these liberties—civil, ecclesiastical and spiritual—are intimately connected in Scriptures, so they proved to be in the thinking of Knox and Melville. He who has been freed from the dominion of sin and Satan lives to serve God and enjoy his blessings. Being the Lord's free man, the pardoned sinner is bound to serve his divine Lord according to his will and for His glory. His loyalty to Christ will therefore arm him to oppose and resist any thing which will corrupt or deny the liberty of the church or which will deprive him of his God-given liberties as a citizen of the state. Knox was the first great champion in Scotland of these three aspects of liberty; when he had passed, Melville took up his mantle.

#### A LIFE LIVED UNTO GOD

Born August 1, 1545, at Baldovy, Scotland, and orphaned at age four, Andrew Melville was raised by an older brother. Because Andrew showed a proficiency for learning, his brother gave him the advantages of education. In his fourteenth year he entered St. Andrews University and, having finished his course, he left the school with the reputation of being "the best philosopher, poet, and Grecian of any young master in the land."

In 1564 Andrew left Scotland to study in France, studying Hebrew and other oriental languages in Paris and afterward studying law in the University of Poitiers. From France he went to Geneva where he

While most of these converts are not known personally to us, many have become well-known. The course of history was changed by them. For example, after the John Huss was burned at the stake, his followers in Bohemia became so numerous and influential that the pope was unable immediately to crush the young reformation there, as he had hoped. In the same way, the number of converts in Germany kept the pope and the emperor from seizing Luther and putting him to death.

In addition to the church members at large, many fine Christians during those years followed God's call into the gospel ministry or into writing or teaching in support of the gospel. To the sermons of Luther, Calvin, and Knox, we can add those of hundreds of other learned and dedicated ministers, who faithfully labored in their congregations. Many took pen in hand and wrote fine defenses of the Protestant doctrines and expositions of the Bible. Protestant universities and schools were filled with eager scholars and professors, who systematized and refined the doctrines of the Reformation.

#### THOSE WHO STUDIED AND TAUGHT THE SCRIPTURES

The Reformation found its power primarily in the Bible. In the previous century Gutenberg had developed printing with movable type. This enabled the public at large for the first time to obtain Bibles and other Christian

literature at reasonable cost. Suddenly people could compare the church's preaching and practice with God's Word. Some, such as Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1340-1400), the English writer, and Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), the fiery reformer of Florence in Italy, had already attacked the wickedness of the church; but now it was apparent for all to see. For lasting results, though, it was necessary for people to have the Bible in their hands, in their own language. In giving the Bible to the people, God used several sorts of men. Some were scholars, interested in language and culture, in the works of antiquity. Such scholars were called humanists, since they glorified the works of men of the past, and saw great potential in mankind's future development. Some humanist scholars unwittingly gave strength to the Reformation by exposing falsehoods from the Roman hierarchy, and by making biblical study more available to the public. Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457), himself a secretary to the pope, debunked Rome's claim to have received the Vatican as a perpetual donation from the emperor Constantine; he also showed that the official Latin Vulgate translation of the New Testament had errors when compared with the Greek. Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), who followed Savonarola in Florence, was an excellent scholar of languages. Fluent in Latin and Greek by age sixteen, he also studied Hebrew, and influenced Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522) to

study Hebrew; Reuchlin became a great Hebrew scholar and opened the way for the Protestant study of the Old Testament in the original language. Of course, the most famous Christian humanist was Erasmus (1466-1536). While Erasmus remained a Catholic and fought the Reformation, his work aided the Reformation. He wrote scathing satires against the worldliness and wickedness of the popes, clergy, and monks. He edited many Greek and Latin classics and church fathers. Most importantly, he produced four editions of the Greek New Testament, which were widely distributed and formed the basis for many translations into the languages of Europe. It commonly was said, "Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched."

The theological underpinnings of the medieval church had to be evaluated and corrected. Martin Luther gave great credit to William of Occam (ca. 1280-1349), calling him "Occam, my dear master." Occam, the English Franciscan schoolman, powerfully opposed the tyranny of the popes, and taught the doctrine that faith must be bestowed by God as a gift. His influence reached not only Luther, but Wycliffe and Huss before him.

The study and teaching of the Bible were the Reformers' primary weapons in the fight for truth. John Wycliffe (1320-1384), the "Morning Star of the Reformation," was the greatest reformer of the fourteenth century. By emphasizing the Bible, he attacked the false doctrines at the

foundation of the Roman system. Wycliffe produced the first major translation of the Bible (from Latin) into English. He then sent out his students, the "Lollards," as poor preachers, traveling from town to town, reading the Bible and preaching to the people. This produced great fruit throughout England. Wycliffe's biblical studies led him to abandon the false doctrine of transubstantiation. Wycliffe suffered for his faith and learning, yet he shed a great light which never has been put out.

Wycliffe's writings led the young Czech student John Huss (1368-1415) to the knowledge of the truth. While a student in England, Huss himself copied by hand many of Wycliffe's works; some of these copied manuscripts still exist! Back in his own city of Prague, Huss studied and taught, preached and wrote. Huss led many into the knowledge of the truths of Scripture. He remained faithful even though excommunicated, and sealed his testimony with his life, being treacherously imprisoned and burned at the stake.

Even the greatest Reformers had someone to teach them and lead them in biblical study. Martin Luther found such a spiritual father and guide in Johannes von Staupitz (ca. 1460-1524). Himself a biblical and theological scholar who was to become a fellow-professor at Wittenberg with Luther, Staupitz led and encouraged his bright young protégé to study the Bible in order to find his "peace in Christ." Staupitz, while never leaving the

## ANDREW MELVILLE: LION OF SCOTLAND

by Robert Anderson

Exactly four hundred years ago, when Andrew Melville caught hold of the sleeve of King James VI of Scotland and called him "God's sillie vassal" and (according to Melville's biographer Thomas McCrie) proceeded to address the king in a "strain, perhaps the most singular, in point of freedom, that ever saluted royal ears, or that ever proceeded from the mouth of a loyal subject..." we have a still shot of both the personality and principles of one of Scotland's lesser-known reformers.

### ISSUES

Andrew Melville (1545-1622) was the successor of the Scots' most notable reformer, John Knox: their lives overlapped by twenty-seven years. It fell to Melville, in God's sovereign ordering of things, to preserve, promote, defend, and, in certain particulars, to refine the work of Knox. From our vantage point in history, Andrew Melville's greatest contribution was his role in Scotland's struggle for libertycivil, ecclesiastical and spiritual.

In the civil sphere, the question at issue in Melville's day was "shall the king govern by his own arbitrary irresponsible will or shall the powers of the throne be limited by the chartered rights of the people?" The common

doctrine of his age was that "kings reigned by Divine right and that the understandings and consciences of their subjects were in their keeping." Melville was to clash with King James VI on this issue, just as Knox, his predecessor, had collided with Mary Queen of Scots some years before. Wylie, in his *History of Protestantism* says, "Mary held by the principle, to sovereigns a convenient one, of 'the right divine of kings to govern wrong.'" The civil liberty Knox had labored for was on this principle: "all power is founded on a compact expressed or understood between the rulers and the ruled, and that no one has either divine or human right to govern, save in accordance with the will of the people and the law of God." It was this same concept of liberty for which Melville later so valiantly contended.

Melville's philosophy was also at one with Knox respecting ecclesiastical liberty. Both men had to fight against the church's enslavement from two quarters: from Rome and from the heads of state. Before Knox began his reforming work in Scotland, the nation was in bondage to Rome's corrupt doctrine, worship, government and morals. Even when Scotland was able to throw off that yoke, the church's liberty was not to be then and forever safe. Rome sought by various agencies to re-impose the yoke; also Mary Queen of Scots would have subjected the church of Scotland to her own rule in behalf of the Roman church. Whether the pope of Rome or civil

Melancthon continued pursuing negotiations with the legate, but Rome would not compromise. Several electors who had boldly confessed Christ blasted Melancthon for his weakness, but they were princes and not theologians. The man who knew him best, Martin Luther, never treated his friend with contempt. Instead, he exhorted Melancthon as a father and encouraged him to remain true to the teachings of the Bible no matter what the cost. Luther knew that his friend was a true soldier of Christ. He never whitewashed Melancthon's actions, but he did understand the strain that his friend was under and wrote to him in the appropriate fashion (Luther himself could not attend the Diet of Augsburg because he was under the ban. He continually corresponded from nearby Coburg). Philip Schaff put Melancthon's compromises in proper perspective:

Melancthon may be charged with moral weakness and mistake of judgment, but not with unfaithfulness. Luther remained true to his invaluable friend, who was indispensable to the evangelical cause, and did it the greatest service at Augsburg. He comforted him in his letters from Coburg.

## CONCLUSION

Because of Melancthon's actions at Augsburg, some people, since that time, have viewed him as a traitor or a compromiser. These are strong adjectives to use for someone who did so much for the Reformation and, ultimately, for

our own religious freedom.

Without excusing Melancthon's compromise, we do not know all the things that were running through his mind and heart. One thing we do know, at that time not many men were Philip Melancthon. No one could match him in scholarship except, possibly, Erasmus, and few had his sensitivity and devotion to Christ. Although he wavered under these incredible circum-stances, he loved the Church of Christ with all his affections. No one should be hasty in passing sentence; many of us today have difficulty just knocking on our neighbor's door to bear witness, let alone testifying before true enemies of Christ.

Was Philip Melancthon a scholar? Yes, in every sense of the word. Was he a reformer? Martin Luther never doubted it, and neither should we.

*God, grant us more men like Philip Melancthon, and by your grace keep us from compromise. Amen. 📖*

Roman church, did guide Luther to salvation and the root of all Christian truth. Luther called him "my reverend father in Christ." John Calvin, likewise, did not stand alone. Jaques Lefèvre (1455-1536), the celebrated French scholar, professor, and Reformer, was producing "Protestant" commentaries years before Luther nailed up his ninety-five theses. He produced the French New Testament and other important works, and had to flee his native France for several years. One of Lefèvre's students was Guillaume Farel (1489-1565), the fiery French Reformer who brought John Calvin to Geneva and worked with him there. The Swiss Reformation itself was begun largely through another biblical scholar, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531); he was a well-trained scholar, especially strong in the classical languages. He once wrote to a friend, "Nothing but God shall prevent me from acquiring Greek, not for fame, but for the sake of the Holy Scriptures." He even copied out Paul's epistles in Greek by hand, and learned them by heart. Zwingli's learning and preaching established the strongly Reformed tradition of the Swiss Reformation and provided the background for the success of Calvin. Biblical scholars continued throughout the Reformation, making tremendous contributions as they studied the Scriptures and translated and taught them to the preachers and people of their various countries. We have mentioned Jaques Lefèvre's translating the New Testament into French. Of course,

Luther himself translated the Bible into German, ably assisted by the scholarly Philip Melancthon (1497-1560). In England William Tyndale (1494-1536) continued the vital work of John Wycliffe. Being convinced that "it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth, except the Scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue," Tyndale translated the Bible from the original languages into English, and had it published and shipped into England by the thousands. He gave his life as a martyr for this great reforming work. In Scandinavia, what was to become a great Protestant stronghold, Laurentius Petri (1499-1573) led in the translation of the Bible into Swedish; it was joined soon the translation of the New Testament into Danish. The number of biblical scholars multiplied with the progress of the Reformation. Many of them, such as Joseph Scaliger (1540-1609), the French Huguenot language and textual scholar, lived under constant threat of persecution, being forced to flee for their lives. Yet their work, often unremarked, laid the foundation for the powerful and confident preaching of the Reformers.

## THOSE WHO RISKED THEIR LIVES AND KINGDOMS

No study of the Reformation would be complete without reference to the brave secular rulers who supported the biblical teaching against the pope and the emperor. In the early years of the

German Reformation, several rulers were the only protection for the infant movement. Frederick the Wise, duke of Saxony (1463-1525), stands out as a striking example. Although he remained a pious Catholic, Frederick was a just and fair ruler who took seriously his responsibilities. He refused to allow his subject Martin Luther to be taken away to Rome without a fair trial. He insisted on Luther's being given a hearing at the Diet of Worms; and then, when the emperor declared Luther an outlaw, he arranged for Luther's "kidnapping" and safe refuge at the Wartburg castle. Frederick did receive both the bread and the cup before his death from Spalatin, Luther's friend; both Luther and Melancthon preached at his funeral. Frederick's brother John the Constant openly declared himself a follower of Luther, and continued to promote the Reformation in his territory.

The Diet of Augsburg in 1530 provided a dramatic moment for the Protestant rulers. Luther was not able to attend; the emperor Charles V demanded all the princes to return to the Roman church, under dire threat of invasion and a new inquisition. Nevertheless, the outnumbered princes stood firm. They signed the Augsburg Confession, drafted by Melancthon, and openly defied the emperor. Their names have long been remembered with respect: John, duke of Saxony, elector; George, margrave of Brandenburg, elector; Philip,

Landgrave of Hesse; Francis and Ernest, dukes of Lüneburg; and representatives from the free cities of Nuremberg and Reutlingen. It is said that the public reading of this German document at the diet took two hours. After it was read, these rulers, even though they were not preachers or theologians, publicly assented to this Protestant confession, at risk of their lives and kingdoms. God used them to protect the Reformation and its adherents in that critical time.

These and other rulers fought to defend the Reformation. Philip of Hesse led in the formation of the Protestant Smalcald League, which stood against the aggression of the Catholic princes of Europe. Later, in the Thirty Years War, wave after wave of Catholic persecution and aggression was resisted by brave Protestant princes and their armies. Frederick V in Bohemia was one ruler who fought and lost the battle, losing his crown. King Christian IV of Denmark fought bravely, with English help. King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden was a greatly gifted general who swooped through much of Europe, liberating large areas captured by the Catholic rulers; he was later killed in battle. The young King Edward VI of England and later his sister Queen Elizabeth I struggled against the Catholic rulers of the Continent and conspiracies in their own country in order to maintain and protect the Protestant heritage. While some princes fought for carnal motives, others truly believed the truths of the

thousands of copies were sold.

### **STRUGGLES AND DISAPPOINTMENTS**

These years for Melancthon were filled with blessings and abundant labors for the Kingdom of God. At the same time there were many assaults launched from the enemies of the Reformation and a multitude of struggles and fears for Philip Melancthon. The edict of Worms had put a ban upon Martin Luther, and many people used the Reformation for their own gains and advantage.

If these things weren't bad enough, there was disharmony among the different parties seeking reform. At Marburg, in 1529, Melancthon sought unity between the Luther and Zwingli. Articles of faith were drawn up and the two sides found common ground on fourteen out of fifteen propositions. This was not good enough for Luther; there would be no unity. All these things brought great sorrow to the heart the reformer Melancthon. His impulse to unify against a common enemy was not stimulated out of fear, but rather, that the Church of Christ be whole.

### **THE DIET OF AUGSBURG**

In 1530 the emperor Charles V convened the Diet of Augsburg. The threat of the Turks was great and the situation between Rome and those seeking reform was bringing disunity and weakness to

Europe. The German princes wanted Charles and the Diet to grant them freedom to preach biblical doctrines and to worship with legal status. Melancthon drew up the Augsburg Confession, and on June 25, 1530, the document was read aloud at the Diet. Many from the opposition were astonished when they heard the graceful way Melancthon had set forth the propositions (most of the statements were positive affirmations of faith; only a few were directed against the Roman Church and the papacy). The electors who signed the document did not shrink back from confirming their faith. Although the reformers did not receive what they had desired from Charles, they did have biblical articles of faith that remain the standard confession for conservative Lutheran Churches to this day. The events at Augsburg laid the groundwork for Protestant victories in the future.

### **MELANCTHON'S COMPROMISE**

The pressures of the Diet of Augsburg were great upon Melancthon. When the papal legate Campeggi counseled the emperor to crush the movement with great persecutions, Melancthon assured him that the Protestants did not differ in doctrine from Rome and that minor changes in worship and ecclesiastical order should be tolerated (the Roman Church did not officially condemn the doctrines of the reformers until the Council of Trent over a decade later). In the weeks that followed

possible strategies with Luther and Carlstadt. At one point during the disputation a frustrated Dr. Eck told him to stop helping the Wittenburg speaker.

### MELANCTHON'S MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Melancthon had great resolve to stay at Wittenburg, and yet other universities also coveted his talents. Because of this, many of Melancthon's peers desired that he solidify his commitments by marrying the daughter of the city's burgo-master. Philip, at first, was hesitant, not willing to give up any of his study time, but in the summer of 1520 he married Catharina Krapp. Soon domestic life began to grow on the reformer, and he understood and rejoiced over the virtues of marriage. His pious and affectionate wife gave him many blessings, but most of all, his four children. Melancthon's original fears were unwarranted; his work was never compromised because of his family. He went to bed shortly after supper and greeted the next day at 2 o'clock in the morning. He would use one hand to rock his infant's cradle and in the other he held a book of his choice.

### MELANCTHON'S COMMON PLACES

The next year, while Luther was penned up at the Wartburg Castle working diligently on his German translation, Melancthon was back in Wittenburg producing the first

systematic theology based solely on the Word of God. This document was called *On the Common Places of Theology*. Melancthon's goal was to set forth the major teachings of the Bible in a systematic and simplistic fashion.

His own lectures on the book of Romans were the source for *Common Places*. The doctrines of grace, faith, original sin, and repentance were plainly set forth. In these early days Melancthon's position on free will was fatalistic, i.e., man's will is not free in any respects. Later he tilted to an opposite stance, believing that man can receive or reject the Gospel after the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Melancthon's treatise became the theological textbook of the movement and its many editions were well received by all the major Protestant scholars, including Calvin. The Reformation in Germany now had more than biblical preaching. The movement had a solid confession and, in a few months, would have a German Bible. The Word of God was the foundation of the work in Wittenburg, because of this the gates of Rome could not prevail against it.

### THE GERMAN BIBLE

After Luther returned from Wartburg Castle, both he and Melancthon spent hours with the Greek preparing the final draft of Luther's German New Testament (Luther's first draft produced at Wartburg only took him eleven weeks to complete!). In 1522 the NT was published; because of its readability and affordability many

Reformation, and were willing to sacrifice their lives and kingdoms for Christ. They protected their people and gave a shelter for those teaching the truths of the Bible.

### THOSE WHO SUFFERED FOR THE REFORMATION

Savonarola and Huss both suffered martyrdom because they opposed the Roman hierarchy, long before Luther's Reformation. Luther, Calvin, and Knox all lived as hunted men, yet they were able to complete their lives and die of natural causes. This was not the case with many of the other Reformers. Historical records are full of accounts in which brave Protestants sealed their faith with their blood. Without these martyrs, the influence of the Reformation may well have died out. The victims of the papal aggression died by the thousands. Some died on the battlefield. Others were tortured and put to death in dreary dungeons of the Inquisition, or publicly burned at the stake.

It is true that there were martyrs on both sides, but during the Reformation years the Protestant martyrs far outnumbered the Roman Catholics. Much publicity has surrounded the martyrdom of the English Catholic Lord Chancellor Sir Thomas More, who was beheaded by Henry VIII; there even is a popular movie about him, "A Man for All Seasons," in which he is played sympathetically by Richard Burton. Yet, under Queen Mary many English leaders in state

and church were not only executed, but painfully burned at the stake. I do not know of any popular movie made about these martyrs. These English martyrs were well known and respected throughout the country. They included the aged Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury; Bishop John Hooper, who was a well known scholar and Reformer, having studied all over Europe, and a devoted preacher and pastor; Bishop Nicholas Ridley, a biblical scholar who had learned much of the Bible by heart; and Bishop Hugh Latimer, the famous popular preacher. As they were burning together, Latimer called out to his friend Ridley, "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England as I trust shall never be put out!" Their faithfulness in death left an indelible impression on their countrymen. This article could not possibly do justice to note all the martyrs who suffered for the Reformation. In Germany, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, England all over Europe and the world hundreds of thousands willingly suffered pain and death to be faithful to their consciences and the Word of God. John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (later popularly known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*), written in 1563, details some of these accounts. That book greatly influenced his own time and the centuries after him. Just as in the early days of the church, in the words of the church father Tertullian, "The blood of the

*BIOGRAPHIA***HERITAGE OF THE  
WALDENSIANS: A  
SKETCH**

by Judith Collins

**ORIGINS**

Historical difference of opinion concerning the origin of the Waldenses' claims either that they derived their name, organization and beliefs from Peter (Valdo) of Lyons in France, or that they predated Peter who probably acquired the name Valdo from his connection with the Valdese.<sup>2</sup> These people were known as Vaudois and Valdenses in ancient writings pre-dating Valdo.<sup>3</sup> Peter and his followers were first known as the Poor Men of Lyons, who were expelled from that city in the 1180s before they joined with the valley men of the Cottian Alps in northern Italy. Volumes have been written on both sides of this question. Suffice here to note that it is most likely that the French word for valley, *vaux*, gave rise to the nickname Vaudois, while the Italian *vallis*, likewise created Vallenses or Valdesi or Valdenses, all meaning "valley-men," referring to those who lived in the near and remote reaches of those valleys of the Cottian Alps lying within the dioceses of Milan and Turin.

The Roman Catholic Church, who steadily persecuted them through the centuries, maintained

martyrs is seed," so in the Reformation their blood was indeed "the seed of the church." God used many people to bring reformation to his church. All are important and precious to him. Therefore, while we rightly honor Luther, Calvin, and Knox, let us also remember and be grateful for the "Other Reformers," those "hidden lights in God's kingdom." 📖

**"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the Church: first, apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of**

affections such as the fear and love of God, and true obedience; but it can accept or reject divine grace." Melancthon did not allow his personal struggles with theology to shade his duty to the Church. The Augsburg Confession, which Melancthon composed, is faithful to Luther's teaching on the bondage of the will.

**HIS CALL TO  
WITTENBURG**

In 1518, upon the recommendation of Reuchlin, the elector Frederick invited Melancthon to teach in Wittenburg. After an exhortation from Reuchlin, Melancthon accepted the call and set out for the university. Upon Philip's arrival, Martin Luther and the rest of the faculty were unimpressed with the twenty-one year old, passing quick judgment upon his small frame and timid personality. However, when Philip delivered his inaugural address four days later their skepticism was answered. All those who were present were amazed and Martin Luther was overjoyed.

It was at this time that Luther received much needed encouragement. Throughout his years at Wittenburg Luther had followed his conscience as it was instructed by the Word of God. Ten months earlier he had nailed his ninety-five theses upon the door of the Wittenburg Church, and shortly he would have to appear before Cardinal Cajetan to answer for his actions. From the start Luther was

unsure of the direction to take and a split with Rome was the furthest thing from his mind; but God, knowing the pressures that awaited him, raised up the perfect friend and fellow-laborer in Philip Melancthon. The two were different in temperament and personality, and yet had the same devotion and zeal for the truth. The boldness and insight of Luther and the gentleness and scholarship of Melancthon were a perfect compliment. Although Melancthon wavered in some areas at the Diet of Augsburg and at the end of his life, while Luther was alive they combined for a dynamic team of reformers. After filling the Greek chair at the University, Melancthon immediately began lecturing on Homer, the epistle to Titus, and then, other biblical books. He taught both Greek and Hebrew grammar and stimulated the whole student body to study the ancient languages with vigor. His classes were constantly full, and soon he became the school's most popular professor. The University's reputation became so great that students from all over Europe flocked to attend. Melancthon was never ordained, and yet he interpreted the German sermons for the foreigners after the services were over. In 1519, Philip, along with many others, escorted Luther and Carlstadt to the Leipzig disputation. There, he proved to be extremely helpful during and between the debates. He listened intently to the speakers and found the weaknesses in the Catholic argumentation. During intermissions he discussed

Pforzheim, Philip continued to excel in his studies, and especially in Greek. When Reuchlin came for a visit he was so impressed with the youth's aptitude that he presented Philip with two precious gifts: the Bible and a Greek grammar.

On a second visit Philip proved himself competent, not only in Greek, but also in Latin (in fact, by the age of seventeen Melancthon was more proficient in Greek and Latin than in his native German). It was at this second visit that Reuchlin, following the habit of many scholars of the time, changed Philip's last name from Schwartzerd to the Greek name Melancthon (both names mean *black earth*). In 1509, at the ripe age of twelve, Melancthon left Pforzheim and attended the University of Heidelberg. He continued his classical education, including philosophy, and graduated two years later with his Bachelor's degree. At the invitation of Reuchlin, Philip then continued his training at Tubingen. After pouring all his energies into his studies, a seventeen year old Melancthon graduated with a well deserved Master of Arts degree in 1514; this young man was truly a "master" in the ancient languages.

During these years Melancthon did not neglect his study of the sacred Scriptures either. In between church services he was seen enjoying a book, and because his volume was thicker than the prayer books, he was accused of reading secular literature on the Lord's Day. However, the book that com-manded his attention was

the Bible, something he carried with him always. After graduation, and before his call to Wittenburg, Melancthon busied himself at the University of Tubingen, lecturing on ancient literature and translating the works of the Greek philosophers. In 1518, when he was just twenty-one years old, Melancthon published his own Greek grammar. Not only did this future reformer have the knowledge, he also possessed the ability to communicate his lessons in a thoughtful and stimulating fashion. Melancthon, like Reuchlin and Erasmus, was influenced by humanism. Many aspects of Renaissance humanism prevailed at the time: trade, industry, ideas, observation, study of the classics: literature, philosophy, art and architecture, ethics, freedom, and a new outlook on the individual were all emphasized. Purity in the Church was also a concern, and it was the hope that knowledge would check the corruption and hypocrisy.

Throughout Melancthon's life he stressed the importance of scholarship, education, and a devout Christian testimony. Although Melancthon sided with Luther and Carlstadt on the issue of free will at the Leipzig disputation, this Renaissance mind-set led him later on to reject Luther's teaching on the bondage of the human will. Instead, he adopted a more humanistic approach. Philip Schaff described Melancthon's position aptly: "Human nature is radically, but not absolutely and hopelessly, corrupt; it can not without the aid of the Holy Spirit produce spiritual

that the Valdenses derived their origin, name and beliefs from Peter (Valdo) of Lyons. It is more probable that the Roman Catholic authors are as mistaken in their statement of the origin of the Valdesi as in their statement of their heresies. It was not in Roman Catholic interests to admit they opposed a group which traced their history back to apostolic primitive Christianity in a purer tradition than the Roman.<sup>4</sup>

The Valdese themselves trace their descent as a church to the time of Claude, Bishop of Turin in the ninth century.<sup>5</sup> Those churches were probably the descendants—spiritual, if not lineal—of the many generations of believers in that area of northern Italy since the early days of the church. There was a line of bishops and leaders there, started by Ambrose, Bishop of Milan in the fourth century, who maintained independence from the Roman See, upheld the supremacy of Scripture in all things, including the gospel of justification by faith alone. Many of the successors of Ambrose through subsequent centuries held to the same doctrines.

Of these was Claude, "the most distinguished advocate of evangelical doctrines whom that age produced," who boldly resisted Roman innovations, "owned Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the church, attached no value to pretended meritorious works, rejected human traditions, acknowledged faith alone as securing salvation, ascribed no power to prayers made for the dead, maintained the symbolical character of the Eucharist, and above all,

opposed with great energy the worship of images which he... regarded as absolute idolatry."<sup>6</sup> It is to this bishop the Valdenses claim their origin as a church, although spiritually, they could and often did, claim a descent as well from the evangelical groups preceding Claude, those groups led by the evangelical leaders after the time of Ambrose, and perhaps before Ambrose, back to the earliest Italian converts. Such early Christians are believed to have taken refuge from persecution in the Alps valleys where the traditional independence of these northern Italian bishoprics provided a protecting shield to those later to become known as the valley-men, the Valdenses.

The *Noble Lesson* (*Nobla Leyczon*) was the basic creed of Valdese beliefs. It dates itself within its text to the year 1100.<sup>7</sup> This pre-dates Peter of Lyons, who with his followers, were chased from Lyons about 1186, when they joined the valley dwellers, the Valdese. (Lyons is situated in southeast France, west of the Italian border and the Cottian Alps.) The *Lesson* mentions the Vaudois (Valdense) as being already persecuted and as having already a well-known history.<sup>8</sup> The idiom of the *Nobla Leyczon* is that of the valleys, the Romance language, and not that of the idiom of Lyons, a French dialect, which it would have been if Peter (Valdo) and his Poor Men had authored it.<sup>9</sup> No mention of Peter and his followers is found

in the *Lesson*.

### STANDING FIRM IN PERSECUTION

The courage and perseverance of the Valdese throughout their persecutions is a tale beyond the scope of this short article.<sup>10</sup> The severest campaigns against them filled the 13th through the 17th centuries, with short periods of respite now and then. To condense their sufferings into one inadequate paragraph, the nouns deceit, trickery, broken promises, flattery, threats, robbery, pillage, slow tortures, destruction, slaughter, exile might serve for a start. The Roman Catholic persecutors ripped limbs from live victims, dashed the heads of children against the rocks, marched fathers to their deaths with the heads of their sons around their necks; parents watched their children violated and murdered. Other tortures were too vile to describe. Women and children were thrown off high peaks to be dashed to pieces. Valdese taking refuge in caves were suffocated by fires lit at the cave mouths. Soldiers took refuge in Valdese homes, only to rise up and slaughter their hosts upon the given signal.

In J. A. Wylie's words:

These cruelties form a scene that is unparalleled and unique in the history of at least civilized countries. There have been tragedies in which more blood was spilt, and more life sacrificed, but none in which the actors were so completely de-humanized, and the forms of

suffering so monstrously disgusting, so unutterably cruel and revolting. The 'Piedmontese Massacres' in this respect stand alone. They are more fiendish than all the atrocities and murders before or since, and Leger may still advance his challenge to 'all travellers, and all who have studied the history of ancient and modern pagans, whether among the Chinese, Tartars and Turks, they ever witnessed or heard tell of such execrable perfidies and barbarities.'<sup>11</sup>

In a document Pastor Henri Leger carried from the Valdese to the Protestants of Europe, they wrote:

Our tears are no longer of water; they are of blood; they do not merely obscure our sight, they choke our very hearts. Our hands tremble and our heads ache by the many blows we have received. We cannot frame an epistle answerable to the intent of our minds, and the strangeness of our desolations. We pray you to excuse us, and to collect amid our groans the meaning of what we fain would utter.<sup>12</sup>

### FOR THE LOVE OF THE SCRIPTURES

The Valdese in their most ancient works would speak of themselves as being in communion with the Catholic Church,<sup>13</sup> while at the same time setting forth only those doctrines of the primitive Catholic church and not at all those of later Roman Catholicism. Nonetheless, though they knew that Christ had ordained only two sacraments, they recognized most of the Roman sacraments, but with more Biblical interpretations on them. For instance, their practice of

### PHILIP MELANCTHON: SCHOLAR AND REFORMER

by Eric Frank

The sixteenth century Reformation gave the Protestant Church a rich heritage and many examples of faith and courage. The writings and preaching of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox were so voluminous that they put many ministers in this 20th century computer age to shame. However, when reflecting on these important figures, it is easy to allow their accomplishments to over-shadow the labors of other men who humbly worked side-by-side with the "Super-Reformers," and in many cases, were a stabilizing factor for their stormy personalities.

One of these "other" reformers was Philip Melancthon. By the providence of God he was groomed to stimulate and establish the reformation in Germany with Martin Luther. Although Melancthon died in 1560 at the age of sixty-three, his activities for the Kingdom of Heaven were so numerous and important that only the first part of his life is sketched out in this article.

### HIS BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

On February 14, 1497, Philip Melancthon was born Philip Schwartzerd. George Schwartzerd, his father, was a master armorer in the town of Bretten in the Palatinate (southern Germany). He

was a pious man who had gained the respect of the princes in the Palatinate, Bavaria, and Saxony. Philip's sensitive and compassionate mother also impacted him greatly.

Truly, Melancthon was blessed with godly parents who instilled in him the importance of prayer, piety, and the fear of God. However, before Philip's eleventh birthday his father, on his deathbed, called his young son to his side. After a blessing he sent Philip to his Grandfather Reuter's home; two days later George Schwartzerd died. Although the youngster left his dying father with great sorrow, this event proved to be beneficial for the spiritual awakening that would soon come.

### MELANCTHON'S EDUCATION

During a short stay with his grandfather, Melancthon's thirst for learning began to be quenched and his God-given abilities became evident. Reuter blessed Philip, Philip's brother, and his own son with an excellent tutor, John Hungarus. Hungarus was hard on Melancthon, both, in and out of the classroom, but as the reformer put into perspective much later, "He made a scholar of me. He loved me as a son, I loved him as a father; and we shall meet, I hope, in heaven." Shortly after this time Philip's grandfather also passed away, and the three boys were sent to stay with a grand aunt, the sister of the famous Hebrew scholar Reuchlin. At the school in

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.207. According to Schaff, Bullinger even took steps to secure a pension for Zwingli's widow and educated two of Zwingli's children along with his own. Henry did not chafe at walking in the footsteps of the fiery Zwingli!

<sup>4</sup> G. W. Bromiley, ed. *Zwingli and Bullinger*, Ichthus ed., (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> Robert C. Walton, "Johann Heinrich Bullinger," *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, rev. ed., J. D. Douglas, ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), pp. 165, 166.

<sup>6</sup> "Of the Holy Catholic Church," in Bromiley, pp. 313, 321.

<sup>7</sup> Bromiley, endnote, p. 352.

<sup>8</sup> "Of the Holy Catholic Church," in Bromiley, p. 323.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. JohnDavid Hascup, Class notes, Western Reformed Seminary, Spring, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Bromiley, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Walton, p. 165.

<sup>12</sup> *The History and Character of Calvinism*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 72.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>14</sup> Hascup class notes, WRS, Spring, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Schaff, p. 207.

## Letters to the Editor

### Questions? Comments? Thanks? Rebuttals?

We want to hear from you! We intend *the WRS Journal* to be a forum for the development of opinion and interpretation among members of the Bible Presbyterian Church and our friends. So, please, *write* to us!

Our criteria for publishing a letter to the Editor are simple:

**First**, your letter must include your name, address, phone number, and signature. Unsigned letters will not be published.

**Second**, while you are welcome to disagree with our contributors, your letters should reflect Christian charity at all times as you express your opinions.

Please understand that we may have to edit your letter somewhat to conform to our space requirements. All letters become the property of *the WRS Journal*. Please mail to:

**Letters to the Editor**

"repentance" and "confession" was more of a spiritual than an outward duty as in the Roman ritual: "...that of penitence depends, in the first place, on a displeasure and sorrow for sin, and in the second place, on a fear not to fall into it again."<sup>14</sup> The power of "binding and loosing" they understood to be the pastor's ability to give good advice for a man's deliverance from the bondage of sin.<sup>15</sup> Idolatry, prayers to saints, and purgatory they abhorred. But they distinguished between mortal and venial sins. They refused to call their pastors "Father", preferring to use *barba*, (plural, *barbe*) meaning "uncle." They admired but did not require celibacy in their clergy.

All through their long history these valley dwellers, the Valdese, had owned, revered, obeyed their Scriptures. It was their great glory to hold Scripture as their supreme authority. They translated the Bible (possibly from the Hebrew and the Greek) into their vulgar tongue, the Romance language, and laboriously made many copies of this Scripture for their disciples.<sup>16</sup> And this while the rest of Europe was content with the Latin of scholars. Before Wycliffe thought of putting the Bible into the English of his day, the Valdese had their vernacular Bible. They memorized great portions of Scripture. One inquisitor in 1260 tells of meeting a pastor who recited the whole of Job, and of many others who memorized the whole of the New Testament. They copied other good writings; this was one of the tasks of the Valdese *barbe* in order to

instruct their disciples. Old bibliographies tell of many ancient manuscripts of spiritual treatises, poems, sermons, confessions, catechisms and the like.<sup>17</sup>

With such a love of truth in a people, we are not surprised to learn that they founded their own little college for the *barbe*, who

...were required to commit to memory the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John, the general epistles, and a part of those of St. Paul.... During two or three successive winters [they were] trained to speak in Latin, in the Romance language, and in Italian. After this they spent some years in retirement, and then were set apart to the holy ministry by the administration of the Lord's Supper and by imposition of hands.<sup>18</sup>

Pastors were required to take their turn as missionaries. They went out two by two, a young man and an old one. Taking to the roads as peddlers, or as artisans, or as physicians, they carried the Bible in their hearts and minds. Stopping for the night in a remote cottage in the course of their travels, they would testify of the gospel and write out Scripture portions to leave with their hosts. A light and a blessing wherever they went! Very few were married, as their manner of life, travels, poverty, and the attendant dangers often precluded family life. They traversed Italy and had stations organized in many places with thousands of secret adherents in most of the towns. And not only Italy, but Valdese missionaries spread the Gospel over the greater part of Europe.<sup>19</sup>

High up in the impenetrable

remoteness of their highest mountains stands still today the small stone building of the college of the *barbe*, in a tri-level construction to fit the slope. Modern travelers today draw in breath as they gaze at the smoke-blackened walls, the tiny windows, the fireplace, and the great slabbed table-top, said to be six to seven hundred years old. It is not hard to imagine the student-*barbe* seated around that huge stone slab. Today on the center of the slab is an open Olivetan Bible, and thereon hangs a tale.

#### A LEGACY OF LIGHT

At the time of the Reformation, the Valdese heard with amazement the news of a spiritual renewal within the apostate Roman Catholic Church throughout Europe. In 1526 and 1530 they sent messengers down the mountains to ascertain the truth of such reports. The French and Swiss reformers were just as amazed to hear of believers who had kept the faith through the centuries. It was as if they heard the voice of the primitive and apostolic church bidding them welcome to the truth. William Farel returned the visit when he with others traveled in 1532 to the Valdese Synod at Chanforan up in the mountainous valleys. There for six days they hammered out the truths of the Reformed Faith. The reformers accepted the *Noble Lesson* as an orthodox statement of faith. But it would seem that the Valdese understanding of predestination needed a clarification and a polish,

given and received.

At that time the Valdese had been in a period of great discouragement and disarray, and had frequently hidden their faith by worshipping in caves and other secret places. Often members would outwardly conform by attending Roman Catholic mass and confession in order to avoid the deadly, relentless pursuit and tortures of the Roman Church. Four centuries of it! Throw the first stone if thou dares! The reformers instructed them that they must leave the caves and worship in the open; they must build churches and there worship and cease all conforming. This the Valdese did. As Wylie puts it, thus did the new church repay the old for her faithfulness in past ages, and thus did the older receive the counsels of the younger. "The first" had become "the last," and "the last" first. Nonetheless, the Valdenses had somewhat also to offer. They said in their firm way, "We who have received the Scriptures from the Apostles or their immediate successors, and have always preserved to ourselves this blessing, do now wish to pass on these Scriptures to others who have been without."<sup>20</sup> And they initiated a French translation of the whole Bible.

Robert, a cousin of John Calvin, was chosen to be the translator. It took him three years. Holed away up in the tiny college of the *barbe*, and working probably on that very stone slab we can see today, he toiled night and day. The common folk would trek down to

every corner of the Protestant world, including over three hundred to him from Calvin alone. Henry was a tremendous organizer, and all consulted him much as one consults a library—he was both a clearinghouse of information and a reliable interpreter and compiler of that information. McNeil concludes, "If Calvin was the theologian of the Reformed beyond Switzerland, Bullinger was the personal friend and adviser of many of the leaders in this movement. And his skill in framing statements of belief was un-surpassed even by Calvin."<sup>13</sup>

Earlier I said that Bullinger and his wife exhibited the gift of hospitality in great measure and to great effect. Zurich, in fact, followed its pastor's example and was a haven for refugees from all over Europe. Notable among the persecuted were the exiles from Mary's reign of terror in England. So impressed were they by Bullinger and his teaching that they "took him home" with them in their hearts and their libraries, too! His most important work, the *Decades*, was a series of sermons in five collections of ten sermons each (hence the name) on basic doctrines of the faith. Similar in scope and purpose to Calvin's *Institutes*, the first two decades appeared in 1549, with the subsequent sets coming in 1550 and 1551. When the full folio was published in 1552, translations in German, Dutch, French, and English were quickly made. Significantly, from 1560 to 1660 Calvin's *Institutes* was reprinted in

England twice (it would not be reprinted again until 1831). Bullinger's *Decades* was reprinted seventy-seven times, and his *House Book*, a manual on pastoral theology, was reprinted one hundred and thirty-seven times!<sup>14</sup> The Marian exiles, who became the Puritans when they returned home to England, so revered Bullinger's work that it became the official theological text-book of unlicensed ministers. Along with their Bible and a notebook, the *Decades* was the required text for studying theology and pastoral matters. Thus Bullinger's theology and eccle-siology became the foundation of English Puritanism and Presby-terianism, while Calvin waited in the wings for a revival of interest until the nineteenth century.

Henry Bullinger died on September 17, 1575. His legacy of preaching, correspondence, books, doctrinal statements, and pastoral ministry had profound impact far beyond the limits of his sojourn on earth. Most remarkable was his tolerance of, and compassion for, others within the orthodox faith who differed from him in controversial points. His pastor's heart extended from his city's inhabitants to all of God's people. Theodore Beza rightly called Bullinger "the common shepherd of all Christian churches."<sup>15</sup> 📖

<sup>1</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 8, reprint ed., (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

and very necessary things, and not either outside or contrary to the Holy Scriptures.<sup>8</sup>

Preaching six to seven times a week for over forty years, Bullinger amassed a great quantity of sermons, out of which flowed commentaries on almost every book in the Bible. His letters, tracts, sermons, and commentaries deal with both practical and theological matters on every front. In fact, his writings outnumber those of Calvin and Luther combined!<sup>9</sup>

### ZURICH AND BEYOND

Henry possessed the courage, tenacity, and much of the theology of Zwingli, and added to those qualities meekness, wisdom, patience, and order. Though he was not an original thinker, he was adept at setting forth established ideas in a more orderly, accessible, and agreeable form. His writings and efforts from the pulpit in Zurich demonstrated his desire to reconcile the various factions among the Reformers, and he was often successful. Bromiley observes:

The outstanding episodes were almost all on the ecumenical side. In 1536 Bullinger took a prominent part in the conference which resulted in the First Helvetic Confession. An even more important step was the negotiation of the Consensus Tigurinus with Calvin and Farel in 1549 [*which united Zurich and Geneva theologically, to the dismay of the hard-core followers of both Calvin and Bullinger—LP*]. And by his hospitable treatment of many of

the Marian exiles Bullinger was able to establish the most cordial relationships with the future leaders of the Elizabethan church. He also contributed largely to the defense of the distinctive Reformed teaching against the renewed attacks of Westphalus and Brentius.<sup>10</sup>

From 1531 to 1575 Henry Bullinger labored steadily in Zurich to maintain the reformation light kindled by Zwingli, ground the people in their new faith, and extend the right hand of fellowship to others of like precious faith. This pastoral emphasis would prove to be the key to Bullinger's impact upon Reformation thinking and activity from his time until the present. He reformed the school system in Zurich and reorganized the cantonal synod.<sup>11</sup> The Second Helvetic Confession is Henry's work as well. He interacted (and sometimes contended) with Anglicans, Lutherans, Anabaptists, and Unitarians, treating all with a respect and graciousness that was uncommon in his day. Lutheran refugees came to Zurich to receive his well-known hospitality without fear of rejection. His pastor's heart produced one of the first Protestant books designed to comfort the sick and dying. John T. McNeil notes that "it is a little treasury of comfort and exhortation."<sup>12</sup> Bullinger's *History of the Reformation in Switzerland* still serves as a primary source for historians of the period.

One of the greatest factors in the spread of Bullinger's thought was his letter writing. We have currently over fifteen thousand letters to and from Bullinger from

the towns to procure for him the pure olive oil, the best for the light, and so much of this he used, that he acquired the nickname "Olivetan." To this day history still calls him Robert Olivetan, and his great work the Olivetan Bible. These poor mountain folk, the Valdese, paid for the whole of the project, the translation, the printing and the publishing. This was an immense expense for so poor a people, but they gave what their fathers had preserved with their blood, the Word of God. This gift blessed the French-speaking churches of Europe for three hundred years. Now who was "the first" and who "the last"?

These people had somewhat to glory of in their long history of continuous adherence to the truth, but not before God. They had a pressure of guiltiness and a sensitivity to sin, so strong that "they never cease to bring forward the expression of it again and again in their different works."<sup>21</sup> "We have turned aside from the path of truth. The light of righteousness shines not in us." Or, "The sun of understanding is covered with clouds; iniquity holds us fast in its trammels." Or, "The works of man are of little avail for salvation." Or, "I am timorous and very slow to do good." Or, "I pray you affectionately, by the love of the Lord, to abandon the world, and to serve God without fear."

And with that word, let us leave our sketch of the history, the thinking, the spirit and the contribution of a great people to the ever-reforming church of Jesus

Christ. Their descendants have not kept their fathers' faith. Today the Waldensian Church, which held out against persecution for centuries, has succumbed to the temptations of liberal theology. Their young men, sent abroad for studies, imbibed what would soon kill the church, namely, the unbelief of theological liberalism.

The Waldensian Church today is a member of the World Council of Churches, and few are the pastors who still maintain the faith in the Scriptures that their forefathers died for. Perhaps the best thing we today can do to repay those brave stalwarts of history is to pray for the revival of their faith amongst their descendants. 

<sup>1</sup>From the variety of form which their name has taken through the ages, I have chosen to use primarily the form *Valdese* or *Valdenses*, as being closest to the familiar English form *Waldensians*.

<sup>2</sup>In those ages people did not pass on family surnames. A second name was added to one's given name to indicate origin, or occupation, or some notable characteristic of the individual.

<sup>3</sup>Alexis Muston, *The Israel of the Alps, A Complete History of the Waldenses and Their Colonies: Prepared in Great Part from Unpublished Documents*, Vol. I, Translated by Rev. John Montgomery, (London: Blackie and Son, 1875), page 18.

<sup>4</sup>"There is no point on which authors, zealots for the Church of Rome, and full of passionate hatred against the Vaudois, ought to be read with more suspicion than that of the antiquity or recent (i.e. after Peter Valdo) origin of the detested sect (i.e. the Valdese)." Rev. John Montgomery, translator of

Muston, *op.cit.*, Vol II, page 516.

<sup>5</sup> When Napoleon, in conquering northern Italy, questioned the Moderator of the Waldensian Church, Monsieur R. Peyran, when the Valdese had become an independent church, the Moderator replied, "At the time of Claude, Bishop of Turin." See Stephens, Capt. R.M., *The Burning Bush*, privately published, 1975, page 15.

<sup>6</sup> Muston, *op.cit.*, Vol I, pages 8 and 9, giving his primary sources for the statements.

<sup>7</sup> "Already eleven hundred years have run their course/Since it was written, 'This is the last time.'" (quoted in Stephens, *op.cit.*, page 17). This date is interpreted variously in its context, either as 1100 years after Christ, or after his sermon in Matthew 24, or after the writing of the Book of Revelation. None of these necessitates a connection with Peter (Valdo).

<sup>8</sup> Muston, *op.cit.*, Vol II, Appendix, page 421.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 422,453,459.

<sup>10</sup> For thrilling yet utterly horrific accounts from witnesses in these persecutions, the best authorities are Alexis Muston's *Israel of the Alps*; J. A. Wylie's *History of Protestantism*, Vol. I, pages 18-32, and Vol. II, pages 430-512; and Henri Arnaud's *The Glorious Recovery by the Vaudois of Their Valleys*. A short, popular account is Capt. R. M. Stephens' *The Burning Bush*. These sources abound as well in stories of innumerable escapes, victories, and valiant testimonies to reward the reader.

<sup>11</sup> Rev. J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, 1878, Vol. II, page 485. This monumental work has been republished by the Mourne Missionary Trust, Kilkeel, North Ireland, 1985.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, page 486.

<sup>13</sup> Muston, *op. cit.*, Vol I, page 10.

<sup>14</sup> Muston, *op. cit.*, Vol II, Appendix, page 462.

<sup>15</sup> Muston, *op. cit.*, Vol I, page 21-24.

<sup>16</sup> Muston, *op. cit.*, Vol II, Appendix, page 448.

<sup>17</sup> Muston, *op. cit.*, Vol II, Appendix, Bibliography, *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> Muston, *op. cit.*, Vol I, page 19.

<sup>19</sup> Valdese missionaries evangelized Bohemia before the time of John Huss. In 1142 six of them were condemned and beaten in Oxford, England, thrown out of the city in mid-winter and left to perish. In Cologne, 1332, a *barba*, named Walter Lollard, was burned at the stake. From him came the nickname "Lollard" for English followers of Wycliffe. (Stephens, *op. cit.*, page 12).

<sup>20</sup> See the Preface in the Olivetan Bible.

<sup>21</sup> Muston, *op. cit.*, Vol I, page 25.



and wrote a commentary on Revelation (something even Calvin would not do). Whereas Zwingli emphasized double predestination (God ordains both to glory and reprobation) and an extremely fatalistic view of providence, Bullinger found comfort in single predestination (God ordains to glory and allows reprobation) and refrained from accusing God of being the author of sin. Zwingli denied the imputation of original sin, holding that sin is passed on like a disease (more organic than spiritual in its heritage) but Bullinger took the more orthodox Augustinian perspective. Zwingli believed there were three marks of a true church—the Word, sacraments, and discipline, while Bullinger held with Calvin that there are only two—the Word and sacraments. Accordingly, Henry Bullinger's understanding of the makeup of the visible Church (the "Church militant") was broader than Zwingli's and included "hypocrites" whose genuine nature would be revealed in the judgment if nowhere else.

It is from Bullinger's pen that covenant theology takes the shape with which we are most familiar today. For him the covenant was in two parts: a covenant of works with Adam and a covenant of grace with Abraham. He sees the church beginning with Abraham, and Christ as the head of the covenant. Accordingly, he identifies baptism with circumcision.

Bullinger had a high view of the law, and differed from Calvin regarding the Sabbath. For

Bullinger, Sunday was to be observed the same way in principle that the Sabbath was, with Sunday actually becoming the Sabbath for the Christian. Calvin, on the other hand, held that Sunday is not the Sabbath. The Puritans would follow Bullinger on this point.

Henry agreed with Calvin that the real presence of Christ accompanies the Lord's Supper, distancing himself from Zwingli's position. Concerning baptism, Bullinger held the sign to be water, and the substance to be regeneration. (Luther believed the substance to be Christ, and Calvin taught that the substance is Christ and regeneration together.)

In ecclesiology, Bullinger was instrumental in the refining of Presbyterian government, for as he read the Scriptures he recognized those principles of accountability, eldership, and order that Presbyterians continue to hold today, while opposing forms of Presbyterianism that had become tyrannical in his view.<sup>5</sup> He speaks of doctors, pastors, and deacons in his writings on the church, though sometimes he seems to use the first two terms interchangeably.<sup>6</sup> In matters of worship, "Bullinger excludes all practices, doctrines or regulations imposed by the Church simply on its own authority."<sup>7</sup> He writes:

The Church does not make any new laws, for the church of Jerusalem, or rather the apostolic Church, says 'that is seemeth good both to the Holy Ghost and to the church, that no other burden should be laid upon' faithful Christians, but only a few

verses for them at Christmas, like Luther.”<sup>2</sup> His home was constantly full of refugees, students, fellow ministers, and those of his congregation who needed help or counsel. This aspect of Bullinger’s ministry, expanded when he moved to Zurich, is a testimony not only to his own largesse of heart, but to that of his wife and helper, Anna.<sup>3</sup> Together their home ministry would prove to be a critical factor in the spread of Reformation principles, especially in the British Isles and eventually North America.

The year 1529 also served as a milestone in Bullinger’s public ministry, for it was then that Henry’s father, long frustrated with the corruptions of his Church (he had resisted the sale of indulgences as early as 1518), “publicly announced his adherence to the evangelical teaching.”<sup>4</sup> Of course, he then lost his position as priest in Bremgarten. However, at the request of the townspeople and Joner, Henry was invited to become the town’s first pastor after the reformed pattern. Bullinger’s Bremgarten ministry lasted until the papist military victory over the Protestants at nearby Cappel in 1531. Bremgarten reverted to the Roman Catholics, and the Bullingers were driven out by the authorities. This apparent setback was used by God to establish the steps of Henry Bullinger. For though the Reformation lost a great warrior when Zwingli perished on the battlefields of Cappel, it gained a great builder when Zurich called Henry to fill Zwingli’s pulpit.

### SEEKING A BALANCED THEOLOGY

As a protégé of Zwingli, Bullinger deviates little from his mentor’s thinking in much of his theology. But the deviations that do exist can be surprising, particularly when we realize that it is in those areas that the Reformed church, particularly in England, largely adopted Bullinger’s perspective rather than that of his more illustrious predecessor. It is also worth noting that Bullinger invariably moves toward Calvin (whose thirty-year ministry was “framed” by Bullinger’s forty years in Zurich) when he shifts away from Zwingli’s more radical thought. Henry Bullinger was not interested in being a trailblazer, *per se*. He was more interested in being a guide on an already well-traveled road. His “innovations” come in the form of accommodations that enable those who follow to better keep to the safety of the path. These accommodations are evidence of Bullinger’s desire for a balanced and orderly theology that would do more than simply stir up souls to do battle: it would provide the stamina to stay the course.

Zwingli took an even stronger *sola scriptura* stance than did Luther: he did not admit of any use of the fathers (though he knew them well) and did not accept the book of Revelation as a part of the canon. Bullinger, on the other hand, freely used the fathers as sources for direction in the pursuit of understanding the Scriptures,

### “On the late massacre in Piedmont”

John Milton, 1655

*Avenge, O Lord, thy  
slaughtered saints, whose  
bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine  
mountains cold;  
Even them who kept thy truth  
so pure of old  
When all our fathers  
worshipped stocks and  
stones,  
Forget not: in thy book  
record their groans  
Who were thy sheep, and in  
their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody  
Piedmontese, that rolled  
Mother with infant down the  
rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the  
hills, and they  
To heaven. Their martyred  
blood and ashes sow  
O’er all the Italian fields,  
where still doth sway  
The triple tyrant; that from  
these may grow  
A hundredfold, who, having  
learned thy way,  
Early may fly the Babylonian  
woe.*

### THE MORNINGSTAR OF THE REFORMATION: JOHN WYCLIFFE

by Christopher Lensch

The night is always darkest before the dawn of a new day. Just when we are wondering in the midst of our long night watch whether the darkness will ever be over, a morningstar appears in the heavens. It is the messenger of hope that promises light and warmth as the sun approaches the distant horizon.

John Wycliffe was God’s morningstar in a time of medieval gloom. The church should have been a beacon of light and truth, but it had a reputation of greed and power. The Roman Catholic Church owned one third of the wealth of England while its clergy made up one fiftieth of the population. Monasteries that originally had served as spiritual sanctuaries had turned into swamps of material gratification. Bishops forgot how to be spiritual shep-herds in their quest to amass fortunes and land holdings. The papacy was a political football as an anti-pope in southern France contested the legitimacy of the pope of Rome.

Then God raised up John Wycliffe. Through his study of the Scriptures and from his position of influence at Oxford University, Wycliffe began to change England. More than he ever anticipated, he changed the direction of the western church, setting the stage for the Reformation that would

kindle 150 years after his own time.

### THE EARLY YEARS

John Wycliffe was an English churchman of the latter 1300's. Born around 1330 in northern England, his primary education would have come from the village priest in the Yorkshire region. Miracle and morality plays were also important teaching tools of the day.

Showing scholastic promise he entered Oxford University at age 16, the common age of entrance to the university. His years of study were interrupted by outbreaks of the Black Death between 1349 and 1353, but he completed his master's degree and doctorate by 1372. By this time, he was recognized as Oxford's leading theologian and philosopher. This was no small achievement considering that Oxford was then Europe's premier University, even eclipsing Paris and the schools of northern Italy.

With his several Divinity degrees he took an appointment as rector of the church at Lutterworth. Now he had opportunities to preach and pastor while teaching at Oxford. This experience would broaden his later reform efforts beyond doctrinal controversies. He would make sure that the essential message of the Bible would break outside the walls of ivy league discussion to reach hearts in the villages and countryside.

Wycliffe had become familiar with the Duke of Lancaster,

administrator of Wycliffe's Yorkshire region. When Wycliffe began taking on the powers of Rome, he found an ally and protector in the person of the Duke of Lancaster. Even as Martin Luther had his patron protector who kept him out of the Pope's reach, the Duke's support was crucial to Wycliffe's personal survival. Significantly, the Duke was the real power behind the throne of his senile father, King Edward III.

### ENTERING THE BATTLE

Wycliffe's grasp of gospel truth made him sympathetic to the general spirit of resistance against the Roman Catholic machine in England.

One of his central ideas was that dominion is founded in grace. Contrary to the ideas of the divine right of kings or of priestly prerogatives, his essays "On Divine Dominion and On Civil Dominion" teach accountability in stewardship. If a leader was found faithless, he may legitimately lose his office and privileges. He wrote, "Men held whatever they had received from God as stewards, and if found faithless could justly be deprived of it." Again, "If through trans-gression a man forfeited his divine privileges, then of necessity his temporal possessions were also lost."

The Duke of Lancaster seized upon such thinking to justify his pillaging of church assets. He had Wycliffe present his ideas on dominion before Parliament in

## HEINRICH BULLINGER: "THE COMMON SHEPHERD OF ALL CHRISTIAN CHURCHES"

by Leonard Pine

### PREPARATION OF A PASTOR

Whenever one thinks of the Swiss branch of the Reformation, one usually thinks of Ulrich Zwingli as the pivotal figure. But like the conquering King David, it was not Zwingli's lot to build God's house. That calling came to Zwingli's disciple and successor, Henry Bullinger. Like Solomon in Israel, Henry would expand the borders of the kingdom throughout Europe: consolidating, organizing, and shepherding the flock so newly in the reformed fold.

Heinrich Bullinger enjoyed his four hundred and ninety-second birthday this past July 18. Born in 1504 in Bremgarten, a small town about ten miles west of Zurich, young Henry was raised and trained for the priesthood. His father, a priest himself (who paid the regional bishop a yearly tribute for the privilege of keeping a wife contrary to the dogma of the Church<sup>1</sup>), was a firm but loving man of modest means who loved his God more than himself. He passed his attitude on to his son, who diligently studied the fathers in preparation for teaching in a monastery. Henry's university work in Cologne put him in contact with the works of Erasmus, Luther, and Melancthon, which in turn led him directly to the Scriptures. The seed

fell into fertile ground.

Upon his graduation with the Master of Arts degree in 1522, Henry Bullinger did teach at the Cistercian monastery in nearby Cappel, reforming it with the support of the abbot, Wolfgang Joner. From the vantage point of the monastery, Henry observed with great interest the ministry of Ulrich Zwingli, even attending with Zwingli the Conference with the Anabaptists in Zurich in 1525. In 1527 Bullinger took a leave of absence to study under Zwingli in Zurich, as well as take the time to improve his Hebrew and Greek. Zwingli was apparently favorably impressed with the young man's scholarship, for he invited Bullinger to take part in the disputation at Berne in 1528. Three years later, Zwingli would lie dead in the battlefields of Cappel, and the relationship that was forged during the brief acquaintance of the two men would prove to be the key to Henry Bullinger's future ministry.

During his leave of absence in Zurich, young Henry also became acquainted with another individual with whom he formed a lasting alliance. He married Anna Adlischweiler, a former nun, in 1529. Bullinger's marriage and homelife was a model: his love for his wife was genuine and tender; and of his eleven children, all of his sons became Protestant ministers. Schaff notes, "Bullinger's house was a happy Christian home. He liked to play with his numerous children and grandchildren, and to write little

Calvin's work in the area of church polity.

In Oecolampadius we see the quiet and gentle spirit that is a very necessary part of the Church of Christ. We also see him standing firmly upon the Word of God: one of the crucial doctrines of the Reformation. Oecolampadius was a Christian who desired true unity for Christ's Church, but never at the expense of the Truth. He was uncompromising, but with a spirit of humility and compassion.

This man of God was raised up of the Lord, although today he is largely for-gotten—dwarfed by the more dynamic personalities of his time. Nevertheless the Lord was pleased to use him as He saw fit and to bless His people, including some of those more notable figures of his time. Zwingli said of the Reformer of Basel: "In fact, this gentle and firm man diffused all around him, the sweet savor of Christ; and all who assembled about him grew in the truth." Luther in 1521, well before the emotional Marburg Colloquy, had this to say: "I am surprised at his spirit, not because he fell upon the same theme as I, but because he has shown himself so liberal, prudent, and Christian. God grant him growth." John Calvin referred to both Oecolampadius and Zwingli in his discussion of the sacraments, saying that "even if the two excellent doctors, Zuinglius and Oecolampadius, who were known to be faithful servants of Jesus Christ, were still alive, they would not change one word of our doctrine." Johannes Oecolam-

padius made a contribution to the Reformation, not to be seen of men, but for the honor and glory of God. He did good to all men, but especially to them who are of the household of faith. 📖

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**Like many men whose lives are filled with words, Oecolampadius loved puns. Playing off the German words for *bath* and *bear*, he cheerfully gave the following assessment of his performance at the Disputation of Baden (*bath*) and Zwingli's anticipated victory at Bern (*bear*):**

**"I bathed at Baden; Zwingli shall lead his bear-dance at Bern."**

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1371 when he was trying to raise funds to prosecute the on-going Hundred Years War with France. There was popular support of the action against the church, because with increased war taxes, jealous eyes turned toward the riches of the exempt church properties. In keeping with his ambitions of making England supreme in western Europe, the Duke of Lancaster needed the leading scholar of the leading university in marshaling all English assets.

Wycliffe's essays and support of English civil power against papal power captured the attention of the pope. In 1377 five papal bulls listing 18 errors were issued against Wycliffe, and the next year he was summoned to appear in Rome. The Great Schism of 1378 (i.e., two competing popes) and the protection of his benefactor kept him from having to face possible death.

#### DOCTRINAL REFORMS

These developments widened Wycliffe's distance from the mother church. His early controversy with Rome had been over authority. Now he moved into matters of truth and essential Christian belief.

In 1379-80 he boldly published his tracts *On Apostasy and On the Eucharist*. He protested the idolatry and superstition of the mass. No human can recreate the literal body of the Lord Jesus in the mass. Rather, Christ is received spiritually by faith in the eucharist with no dependence on the words

of the officiant.

Biblical convictions led him to other reformation conclusions in this time. He attacked the very idea of indulgences, of a gratuitous *quid pro quo* forgiveness that cheapens the gift of God. He asked a practical question: "Will then a man shrink from acts of licentiousness and fraud, if he believes that soon after, but with the aid of a little money bestowed on friars, an active absolution from the crime he has committed may be obtained?"

On the doctrine of the church, Wycliffe distinguished between the visible and the invisible church. The invisible church is the true church, and Christ only is the head of that body, not the Pope. As for the visible church, Wycliffe wondered which of the two popes was the head of the organized church, if either.

#### THE MORNINGSTAR SHINES FAR

In God's providence, the papal schism spread the reformers influence beyond the coasts of England. The Roman church in England had remained loyal to the Pope of Rome, while, of course, France supported the French pope. The Roman pope prevailed upon the monarch of Bohemia to break its alliance with France, and to ally with France's nemesis, England.

When Princess Anne of Bohemia married young King Richard II of England in 1382, she brought with her Bohemian scholars to study at Oxford. They imbibed the fresh air

of Wycliffe's biblical thinking. They not only introduced his ideas back in Prague, but also spread his [Latin] essays through Europe.

John Hus would be the primary promoter of these Reformation ideas in the early 1400's. He died a martyr for gospel truth 30 years after the passing of Wycliffe. The same council anathematized John Wycliffe for having made Scripture the final authority. A few years after the death of Hus, the Romanists burned and scattered Wycliffe's bones, but they could not so easily stamp out his reformed doctrine.

Even at the trial of Luther at Worms 150 years after the morningstar reformer, Luther was charged with Wycliffite heresy. But by then the sun was above the horizon and a new day was at hand.

### HERESY CHARGES AGAINST THE REFORMER

Wycliffe escaped martyrdom but not trouble. The Romanist Bishop of London lodged heresy charges against the Oxford scholar in 1382. The Blackfriars' Council convened to consider 24 of Wycliffe's teachings. Ten of them were condemned as heresy, (five were regarding his views of the mass), and the rest were called erroneous. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury would plague him the rest of his days.

Wycliffe's writings were burned and some of his followers recanted. With his connections to the English court, Wycliffe thankfully escaped imprisonment and death. Still his last three years were spent in

domestic banishment at his Lutterworth parish.

At Lutterworth he remained active in writing for the cause of reformation. Even after all his years at Oxford, his greatest contribution was still to come: the first English Bible.

### THE FINAL YEARS: THE BIBLE

John Wycliffe was far from discouraged: the Scriptures had invigorated him and given him life. From his limited vantage point of his parish in exile, Wycliffe kept alive a God-given vision of reaching his land with the gospel.

The first means of spreading the gospel was through the spreading of God's Word. As a true reformer he knew the utmost importance of knowing the Bible: "Forasmuch as the Bible contains Christ, that is all that is necessary for salvation; it is necessary for all men, not for priests alone. It alone is the supreme law that is to rule Church, State, and Christian life, without human traditions and statutes."

Up to this time, England had never seen the entire Bible or a testament in its native tongue. With help from scholarly friends, Wycliffe took the radical step of translating the Scriptures from the Latin Vulgate version into English. He believed the Bible should be in the language of the people:

Christ and His Apostles taught the people in the language best known to them. It is certain that the truth of the Christian faith becomes more evident the more faith itself is

that Servetus first expounded his heresies on the trinity and the divinity of Christ. Oecolampadius was appalled. He exhorted him to "confess the Son of God as co-equal and co-eternal with the Father," or he could not acknowledge him as a Christian.

The practical theology of Oecolampadius was also changing. Earlier in his preaching career he had proclaimed against the idea of a "just war" as he preached through 1 John. This was likely the influence of Erasmus at that time. At the end of his life, we find that he had become sympathetic to Zwingli's military action at Cappel, although he himself was never present on any battlefield. Unfortunately, it was in the battle at Cappel that Zwingli lost his life. Oecolampadius was to last but a few weeks longer.

Oecolampadius was probably weakened in health by the news of Zwingli's death. He gathered his children on the evening of November 21, 1531, and spoke to each of them. His voice was weak. At one point, someone asked him whether the light was too bright for him. He struck his breast and murmured with a smile (perhaps referring to his name as well as to the gospel), "Here's light enough within." He died on November 23, 1531, in the presence of his wife and children.

### CONTRIBUTIONS

Johannes Oecolampadius was used of the Lord to establish some important doctrinal positions of his

day. His study of the Scriptures and his reading and translation of the Church Fathers formulated for the Church the doctrine of the spiritual presence of Christ at the sacrament of the Lord's Table. This work was instrumental in the formation of Calvin's doctrine.

Another very important doctrinal contribution was the matter of church order and discipline. Oecolampadius was quite concerned that when the Reformers broke away from the Roman Catholic Church that they do so "decently and in order." It was important to him that good church government be established in the place of the prelatic government of the Roman organization.

This good government he saw to be more remedial than punitive. Although this was one of his concerns throughout his work for Reformation, he wrote more specifically about church government in the last few years of his life. In his opinion the town councils of his day should act as church councils, a practice that was very common. Oecolampadius advised the establishment of a board of twelve men: four pastors, four magistrates, and four representatives of the lay people. He held that this system of organization would avoid tyranny and uphold the dignity of the Church. It was Oecolampadius who first gave serious thought to the practical details of the office of ruling elder, and, again, was influential in the development of

was in his forties, no doubt quite set in his ways. Erasmus commented that his assistant had taken a beautiful wife to mortify the flesh and that it was time to stop talking about the Lutheran tragedy, for it was much more a comedy, which always ended in a wedding! So, Johannes Oecolampadius married Wibrandis Rosenblatt, the widow of Reformer Ludwig Keller. She was 26, and was to be in turn the wife of Oecolampadius, of his friend Capito, and of his friend Bucer, leading one author to suggest that "her offspring represent a history of the Reformation in several volumes." Oecolampadius dearly loved his three children, whom he named Eusebius (godly), Irene (peace), and Aletheia (truth). On January 6, 1529 the Council of Basel ordered a public disputation about the Mass to be held in June. Unfortunately the Council acted too late. The mood of the town was one of action. On February 9 the town guilds sent an ultimatum to the Council; when it continued to hesitate, an angry crowd of about three hundred began to tear down images in the churches.

Although Oecolampadius was not directly involved in this action, he wrote with relief that the whole matter had been decided so quickly and bloodlessly. Here we can see the hand of the Lord: no lives were lost, and relative peace followed. The significance of these events is highlighted by the fact that the men of Basel were not merely acting in opposition to Rome, but they desired something better. They

acted to replace the bondage of Rome with an emphasis on the preaching of God's Word. The Catholic leaders were "honorably dismissed" from the Council. Evangelical preachers were installed in former Catholic pulpits. Preaching was to center on the exposition of the books of the Bible. Prayer and preaching were given pre-eminence on the Lord's Day, with sermons at eight, noon, and four.

But there were other matters to be resolved. The conflict was far from over. In 1529 Philip of Hesse invited Lutheran and Swiss theologians to discuss the doctrine of the Eucharist in his castle in Marburg. These meetings were known as the Marburg Colloquy. These were mainly private sessions, and no public disputation came about, although detailed notes were taken and published. Oecolampadius was paired with Luther, and Zwingli with Melancthon. Here Oecolampadius made his pre-sentation regarding the spiritual presence of Christ at the Lord's Table, emphasizing a figurative interpretation of the words "This is my body," which Luther very dogmatically asserted to be literally understood. The argument put forth by Oecolampadius pointed to the clearly figurative use of the word "body" in John 6, especially verse 51, as well as Jesus' statement in John 15:1 where he says figuratively, "I am the vine."

In 1531 Oecolampadius encountered the haughty and contentious heretic Servetus. It was at Basel

known. Therefore, the doctrine should not only be in Latin but in the vulgar tongue and, as the faith of the church is contained in the Scriptures, the more these are known in a true sense the better. The laity ought to understand the faith and, as doctrines of our faith are in the Scriptures, believers should have the Scriptures in a language which they fully understand.

It is indeed salutary that one of the largest modern mission agencies for preaching the gospel to every creature is called Wycliffe Bible Translators. Wycliffe missionary linguists have analyzed scores of languages and dialects and translated the Bible into these tongues.

### THE FINAL YEARS: THE LOLLARDS

Besides disseminating the Scriptures, Wycliffe sent out itinerant preachers to speak in place of his muted voice. He armed them with the Bible, tracts, and sermon outlines.

John Wycliffe still had many disciples, students from Oxford and others who hungered and thirsted after righteousness. Though he could not appear in public outside of Lutterworth, he spread gospel truth through England and Scotland through these followers. He called these itinerants "evangelical men" because of their message, or "apostolic men" because of their goal of getting back to Bible basics. His opponents called them "Lollards."

After his death on the eve of 1385, the movement lost its ideological and spiritual leader. The pure gospel was kept alive in many quarters, but persecution drove the Lollards underground in the early 1400s. Later believing generations would support the English Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

### THREE MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Secular historians recognize three watershed contributions of Wycliffe's proto-reformation. His greatest heritage is that he cast the die for reformed religion in England, and he gave the life-changing Bible to the people. A third and uncommonly known fact is that he helped mold the nature of the English language.

Much as Luther shaped the German language with his popular Bible version, Wycliffe's Bible and popular tracts won the day against competing English dialects. Until the end of his life, Norman French had been the language of court, and different regions of England spoke three dialects. The English of Wycliffe, Oxford, and Chaucer, however, became the forebear of modern English.

### CONCLUSION

A British historian from the last century beautifully captures the importance of John Wycliffe. In 1881 Professor Montagu Burrows gave this tribute at Oxford University to the Morningstar of

the Reformation:

To Wyclif we owe, more than to any one person who can be mentioned, our English language, our English Bible, and our reformed religion. How easily the words slip from the tongue! But, is not this almost the very atmosphere we breathe? Expand that three-fold claim a little further. It means nothing less than this: that in Wyclif we have the acknowledged father of English prose, the first translator of the whole Bible into the language of the English people, the first disseminator of that Bible amongst all classes, the foremost intellect of his times brought to bear upon the religious questions of the day, the patient and courageous writer of innumerable tracts and books, not for one, but for all classes of society, the sagacious originator of that whole system of ecclesiastical reformation, which in its separate parts had been faintly shadowed forth by a genius here and there, but which had acquired consistency in the hands of the master.

Wyclif founded no colleges for he had no means; no human fabric enshrines his ideas; no great institution bears his name. The country for which he lived and died is only beginning to wake up to a sense of the debt it owes his memory. And yet so vast is that debt, so overpowering the claim, even when thus briefly summarized, that it might be thought no very extravagant recognition if every town in England had a monument to his memory.

Finally, most historians believe the description of "The Parson" from the Prologue of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is Chaucer's tribute to Wycliffe or at least to his reform efforts exemplified by a

faithful Lollard preacher. It is a picture of a faithful pastor, if not of a reformer.

A kindly Parson took the journey too.

He was a scholar, learned, wise, and true.

And rich in holiness though poor in gold.

A gentle priest: whenever he was told

That poor folks could not meet their tithes that year,

He paid them up himself; for priests, it's clear

Could be content with little, in God's way.

He lived Christ's Gospel truly every day,

And taught his flock, and preached what Christ had said.

And even though his parish was widespread,

With farms remote, and houses far asunder,

He never stopped for rain or even for thunder;

But visited each home where trouble came:

The rich or poor to him were all the same.

He always went on foot, with staff in hand;

For as their minister, he took this stand:

No wonder that iron rots if gold should rust!

That is, a priest in whom the people trust

Must not be base, or what could you expect

Of weaker folk? The Shepherd must perfect

His life in holiness that all his sheep

camp of the Reformers. When Erasmus attacked Luther publicly on the doctrine of the Freedom of the Will, Oecolampadius made some comments in his sermons that Erasmus took personally and did not soon forget. In 1524 he became involved in the eucharistic controversy. He had been undecided in this matter, and had sided much with Luther and his view of the corporeal presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. As he studied the writings of the Church Fathers, however, he came more to understand and emphasize the spiritual presence of Christ. Thus, he became an enemy of sorts to Luther also. He endeavored to avoid the controversy for the sake of peace, but was asked so many questions of his parishioners that he was forced to enter the conflict that Luther and Zwingli were already involved in.

Oecolampadius' contribution to this controversy was, in the words of one author, "to appeal to a spiritual interpretation of the presence which could be found in the writings of the Fathers." Oecolampadius found himself holding a balanced, scriptural position between the literal interpretation of Luther ("This is my body") and the strictly memorial interpretation of the Anabaptists ("This do in remembrance of Me").

Public disputations were frequently used in the Reformation. In 1525 Oecolampadius took on Luther's rival, John Eck. Unfortunately the dispute was held in Baden, a Catholic stronghold. It

was essentially for this reason that he lost the debate. But he emerged much the wiser for the experience.

In 1528 the Reformers set up the Bern Colloquy. Here the Reformers gathered to deliver sermons on such theses as: "The Holy Christian Church, whose only head is Christ, is born of the Word of God, remains in the same, and does not listen to the voice of strangers." These meetings were a great success, and the participants from Basel went home discouraged, not because of the good doctrinal preaching they had heard, but because they felt that their city lagged so far behind Zurich and Bern in the application of these Biblical principles. Perhaps in response to this sentiment, the Basel preachers got together and developed their own liturgy.

Basel was still very much in the control of a Catholic core in its inner Council. The preaching of Oecolampadius became much bolder at this time and he was frequently called to appear before the Council to account for statements made in his sermons. His appearances were respectful but firm. He lectured on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lamentations, Job, Hebrews, the Gospel of John, Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Genesis, and Matthew.

Now his health began to suffer, and it is perhaps on this account that he decided to marry. He had been living with his parents, but his mother had recently passed away, so that he was left to care for his father. By this time Oecolampadius

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light.” It is a Latin play on words for his German name, which sounds much like “haus-schein.” He was truly one of the bright lights of the Reformation and gave his life to the study of God's Word, Biblical languages, and the Church Fathers. Oecolampadius completed his studies at the University of Heidelberg in 1499. His love of learning caused him to enroll as an older student at the University in Tübingen where he matriculated in 1513. There he mastered Greek, Hebrew, and Latin.

It was at this time, in his early thirties, that he met Reuchlin and Melancthon. His studies and the relationships he established with these men proved to be very influential upon Oeco-lampadius and the development of his theology, but he was still essentially a humanist. In 1515 he met and worked with one of the most famous humanists of his day, Erasmus, who was very impressed with his linguistic skills. Oecolampadius became a very valuable resource and aid to Erasmus, and was very instrumental in the publication of Erasmus' Greek New Testament. This connection with Erasmus likely stimulated his interest in the writings of the Greek Fathers, and he began to translate many of their writings. He became a pastor at Augsburg in 1518, where he was influenced by the teachings of Martin Luther. In 1521 he entered a Brigittine monastery. Here, as Luther amongst the Augustinian monks, he found opposition as he

sought to emphasize the study of God's Word and the truth contained therein. Within a year he was forced to depart, and painfully left a good part of his precious Latin, Greek, and Hebrew library behind. He returned to Basel in 1523 where he lectured on Isaiah at the university. Because they were given in German, these lectures proved to be very popular with the citizens of Basel, his audience being often as large as 400. These lectures became the basis for his commentary on Isaiah published in 1525, a commentary praised by both Luther and Calvin. This was the beginning of his involvement with the Reformation. His influence at this time is shown in Erasmus' declaration, “Oecolampadius is reigning here.” Since early 1523 Oecolampadius had been in contact with Ulrich Zwingli, the reformer of Zurich. A loyal friendship developed, and their relationship has often been compared to that of Luther and Melancthon. It was at this time that he also became a good friend of the explosive William Farel, another study in contrasting personalities. We are told by one historian that the letters that Oecolampadius wrote to Farel were “not without an undertone of references to the virtues of meekness and humility.” On one occasion he wrote to Farel, “Your mission is to evangelize, not to curse. Prove yourself to be an evangelist, not a tyrannical legislator. Men want to be led, not driven.” His friendship with Erasmus began to strain as he moved more and more into the

## JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS: LIGHTHOUSE OF THE REFORMATION

by John Dyck

### LIFE AND TIMES

The most memorable figures of history are often the most flamboyant and bold. This is certainly true of the Reformation. The brazen actions of Luther and the vehement declarations of Calvin are not soon forgotten. But there are others that are not so well known, and often they are of a much quieter temperament. This reminds the Church that her Lord does not use men of merely one or another disposition, but that He is pleased to use individuals of many different personalities. For every Luther there might be a half dozen Melancthons and lesserknown men who provide much insight into the development of the history of these times. We find this to be the case with the Reformation in Switzerland. While Zwingli is the outstanding character in Zurich, little is known of Johannes Oecolampadius, the reformer of Basel. Philip Schaff describes him as one “who stood to Zwingli in a similar relation as Melancthon to Luther: inferior to him in originality, boldness, and energy, but superior in learning, modesty, and gentleness of spirit.” He was born in 1482, his original name being Hussgen. He later changed his name to its humanist form: Oecolampadius, meaning “house

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May follow him, although the  
way is steep,  
And win at last to heaven.  
Indeed, I'm sure  
You could not find a minister  
more pure.  
He was a Christian both in deed  
and thought;  
He lived himself the Golden Rule  
he taught. 

*Of the Book that had  
been the sealed-up  
Book  
He tore the clasps, that  
the nation  
With eyes unbandaged  
might look thereon  
And therein find  
salvation.*

—Anonymous, of Wycliffe.

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