

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 48

### THE EFFECT OF THE REFORMATION IN GERMANY ON THE NATIONS OF EUROPE

The position of the **German Empire**, which had been chosen by divine providence as the scene of the early dawn and noonday glory of the Reformation, was most favourable; and more likely than any other nation, to affect by its revolutions, the general state of Europe. Germany was, we learn, at that time, the connecting link between Asia and Europe, and the highway for the commerce of the two hemispheres. It was also famous for imperial diets, which always attracted crowds of dignitaries, both civil and clerical; besides the peculiarity of its constitution, its numerous princes, and its free cities, gave to its internal contests an interest and an importance to all the surrounding countries. In all this we see the wisdom of God, even as to locality; and how naturally and quickly the whole of Christendom would be affected by the progress of the new opinions.

But not only the place, the time and circumstances were all ordered of the Lord to give immediate effect to the proclamation of the revived gospel. The mysterious charm which had bound mankind for ages was broken at once, and for ever. The public mind which had so long been passive, as if formed to believe whatever was taught, and meekly to bear whatever was imposed, was suddenly aroused to a spirit of inquiry and mutiny, and disdainfully threw off the yoke to which it had so long and so tamely submitted. But it was not the human mind only that was agitated by the new contest about religion; the political constitutions of the most ancient kingdoms were shaken to their foundations.<sup>331</sup>

We will now trace its path in some of the countries most interesting to us.

#### SWEDEN AND DENMARK

##### A.D. 1520 — 1530

In connection with the reign of **Louis the Pious**, king of France, we have seen that the gospel was introduced among the Danes and Swedes as early as the ninth century. The indefatigable Ansgarius laboured about forty years in those northern regions, and died in the year 865.<sup>332</sup> Other missionaries followed, but Christianity, in all probability, maintained a questionable

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<sup>331</sup> *History of the Church*, by the Rev. John Fry, p. 333. Dr. Robertson's Works, vol. 6, p. 497.

<sup>332</sup> See Chapter 17: "The Conversion of the Northern Nations".

existence in those barbarous times, and in the midst of pagan darkness. In the twelfth century Rome succeeded in completing the work of conversion, and in adding the Swedish churches to the chair of St. Peter. An ecclesiastical constitution, according to the mystery of iniquity, was immediately imposed upon them, and soon, a flourishing priesthood, from the archbishop to the mendicant friar, covered the land, followed, as it always was, with decaying piety and an impoverished people.

At the dawn of the Reformation, the effects of the papal superstition seemed to be nowhere more firmly rooted, nor more deeply felt than in these countries. "The people were steeped in poverty, and ground down by the oppression of their masters. Left without instruction by their spiritual guides with no access to the word of God — for the scriptures had not yet been rendered into the Swedish tongue... the people were returning to the superstitious beliefs and pagan practices of old times." As in all other countries, the Romish hierarchy had swallowed up the wealth of these kingdoms. The bishops possessed revenues which often exceeded those of the ancient nobility, and sometimes equalled or exceeded those of the sovereign; and not infrequently they dwelt in castles and fortresses, which set the power of the crown at defiance.

By an ancient law, the three kingdoms, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, like England, Scotland, and Ireland, were united under a common sovereign. The cruel tyrant, Christiern II, brother-in-law to Charles V, filled the throne of Denmark when the opinions of Luther began to spread in those countries. Being poor, compared with the priesthood, he had been waiting for an opportunity to reduce their power, that he might take possession of their wealth. Quicksighted enough to see that Protestantism might become popular, he professed to favour the new religion; sent for Reinhard, a disciple of Carlstadt, and appointed him professor of theology at Stockholm. But he, dying shortly after, was succeeded by Carlstadt himself. For some reason he only remained in Denmark a short time, when Christiern invited Luther to visit his dominions, but the Reformer declined the invitation. Meanwhile the conduct of Christiern was so tyrannical, that the Swedes refused to acknowledge him as their king, and appointed an administrator. He raised an army, being assisted with vast sums of money from the Romish clergy, invaded Sweden, gained an advantage over them, and treated the conquered with the greatest barbarity. Seventy noble lords and senators he massacred in cold blood in an open square, the archbishop of Upsala, it is said, approving of his vindictive cruelty. Among the number of these noble victims was Eric Vasa, the father of Gustavus Vasa, one of the most illustrious names in the annals of Sweden.

This noble youth, having escaped the murderous hands of Christiern, fled into Germany. During his sojourn there, he studied and embraced the principles of Luther. At length, emerging from his hiding-place, he raised the standard of revolt, and roused the peasantry of the Swedish provinces to attempt the

restoration of their country's independence. After a severe struggle he defeated and overthrew the tyrant, delivered his country from oppression, was elevated to the throne, and created Sweden into an independent sovereignty in 1523. The Danes, following the example, broke out in open rebellion. Christiern was deposed, and driven from the kingdom in the year 1523. He fled to the low countries, and joined the court of Charles V Frederick, duke of Holstein, was raised to the throne. This prince favoured the Reformation, and ruled with equity and moderation.

The truly patriotic king Gustavus, when firmly seated on his throne, exerted himself in every fair and honourable way, to establish Lutheranism in his own dominions. *Instruction*, not authority, for the conversion of his subjects, was his motto. Olaus Petri and his brother Laurentius, who had studied under Luther at Wittemberg, were the first preachers of the Reformation in Sweden. They also accomplished the all-important work of translating the scriptures into the vulgar tongue. At an assembly of the states in 1527, Gustavus publicly declared, "that he would lay down his sceptre, and retire from his kingdom, rather than rule a people enslaved to the orders and authority of the pope, and more controlled by the tyranny of their bishops, than by the laws of their monarchs." The king's will prevailed, the hierarchy was reduced in wealth and power, but tolerated. It would be difficult for any one to believe in our day, that the Romish clergy had gained possession, by their unhallowed influence, and were enjoying the revenues, of more than *thirteen thousand* estates in Sweden in less than a hundred years. But such was the prevailing power of the Protestant element in the assembly, that it was decreed, "that the estates, castles, farms, and lands, which had fallen into the hands of the church, should be restored; part to be returned to the nation, and part to those nobles from whose ancestors they had been wrested." The bishops submitted and signed the decree. Thus was the Reformation widely introduced and firmly established in Sweden.

The work in **Denmark** was very similar to that in **Sweden**. Frederick procured an edict at the assembly of the state of 1527, declaring that every subject of Denmark was free to adhere to the church of Rome, or to embrace the doctrines of the Reformation. This was enough; the new religion prevailed, teachers flocked from Wittemberg, the scriptures were translated into the Danish tongue, the singing of hymns was introduced into their public and private worship, and the Reformation advanced amid the new sounds of melody and praise. "It is not easy adequately to describe the change that now passed over Denmark. A serene and blessed light arose upon the whole kingdom. Not only were the Danes enabled to read the scriptures of the New Testament in their own tongue, and the Psalms of David, which were also often sung, both in their churches and in their fields, and on their highways,

but they had likewise numerous expounders of the divine word, and preachers of the gospel, who opened to them the fountains of salvation.”<sup>333</sup>

## ITALY

In no country outside of Germany did the reforming opinions find so early an entrance as in the provinces of **Italy**. In this we see the hand of the Lord, and the *silver line* of His sovereign grace. But He had a people there, and they must be brought to Jesus. Many believed and nobly witnessed for the truth of the gospel, as the record of their martyrdoms abundantly testifies. But the light was intolerable to Jezebel, who loves darkness, and it was soon extinguished by the activity of her tribunals.

No people had so little respect for the papal dignity as the Italians. The power of the pope was greater, and his commands were more implicitly obeyed, in the countries most remote from the seat of his government. The personal vices of the popes, the corruption of their administration, the ambition, luxury, licentiousness, and deceitfulness which reigned in their courts, fell immediately under the observation of the Italians. The main object of almost every succeeding pope was to raise money by means of the sacred mysteries, that he might enrich his sons, nephews, and other relatives, with immoderate wealth, even with principalities and kingdoms. Thus all thoughtful Italians, seeing the artifices by which the papacy was upheld, and the impostures on which it was founded, were ready to welcome something better.

“A controversy,” says Dr. McCrie,<sup>334</sup> “which had been carried on for several years with great warmth in Germany and which was at last brought before the papal court for decision, contributed in no small degree to direct the attention of the Italians, at an early period, to the reformed doctrines.” A professed convert from Judaism, leagued with an inquisitor of Cologne, obtained from the Imperial Chamber a decree ordaining all Jewish books, with the exception of the Bible, to be committed to the flames, as filled with blasphemies against Christ. John Reuchlin, the restorer of Hebrew literature among the Christians, exerted himself, both privately and from the press, to prevent the execution of the barbarous decree. But alas! the clergy sided with the apostate, and sentence was pronounced against Reuchlin, both by the divines of Cologne and the Sorbonne of Paris. He appealed to Rome. Erasmus and other distinguished friends of learning in all parts of Europe, wrote warmly in favour of Reuchlin, and determined to make his cause a common one. The monks, who dreaded and hated Erasmus and all men of learning, exerted themselves with the clergy, to obtain the execution of the decree; but the court of Rome protracted the affair from time to time, until the contention that arose between Luther and the preachers of indulgences was carried to Rome for decision; and thus the former controversy was lost sight of in the latter.

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<sup>333</sup> For minute and lengthy details of the progress of the Reformation in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland, see *History of Protestantism* by the Rev. J.A. Wylie — Cassell & Co.

<sup>334</sup> *History of the Reformation in Italy*.

## THE WRITINGS OF LUTHER

In this remarkable providential way, the attention of the Italians had been directed to the Germans, and even to the great Reformer, who had taken part with Reuchlin. “Within two years from the time of his first appearance against indulgences his writings had found their way into Italy, where they met with a favourable reception from the learned.” **John Froben**, the celebrated printer at Basle, writing to Luther about this time, says, “Blasius Salmonius, a bookseller at Leipsic, presented me, at the last Frankfort fair, with certain treatises composed by you, which being approved of by learned men, I immediately put to press, and sent six hundred copies to France and Spain. My friends assure me that they are sold at Paris, and read and approved of, even by the Sorbonists. Calvus, a bookseller of Pavia, himself a scholar and addicted to the Muses, has carried a great part of the impression into Italy... In spite of the terror of pontifical bulls, and the activity of those who watched over their execution, the writings of Luther Melancthon Zwingle, and Bucer, continued to be circulated and read with avidity and delight in various parts of Italy. Some of them were translated into the Italian language, and, to elude the vigilance of the inquisitors, were published under fictitious names...” “Hail! faithful in Christ,” wrote a Carmelite monk of Locarno to the Christians in Switzerland, “think, O think of Lazarus in the Gospels, and of the lowly woman of Canaan, who was willing to be satisfied with the crumbs which fell from the table of the Lord. As David came to the priest in a servile dress, and unarmed, so do I fly to you for the shewbread, and the armour laid up in the sanctuary. Parched with thirst, I seek the fountain of living water: sitting like the blind man by the wayside, I cry to Him that gives sight. With tears and sighs, we, who sit here in darkness, humbly entreat you who are acquainted with the titles and authors of the books of knowledge, to send us the writings of such elect teachers as you possess and particularly the works of the divine Zwingle, the far-famed Luther, the acute Melancthon, the accurate Œcolampadius. The prices shall be paid to you through his-excellency, Werdmyller. Do your endeavour that a city of Lombardy, enslaved by Babylon, and a stranger to the gospel of Christ, may be set free.”<sup>335</sup>

These extracts plainly show — and many more might be given — what an abundant entrance the gospel had into Italy, and at a very early period of the Reformation. And for more than twenty years the followers of Luther and Zwingle were allowed to spread the truth, publicly preach the gospel, and otherwise witness for Christ, almost unmolested. The wars, which we have had occasion to refer to in tracing the history of the Reformation in Germany, greatly affected Italy. Engrossed by foreign politics, and deeply involved in the struggle between Charles and Francis, the court of Rome disregarded, or thought exaggerated, the representations that were made to them of the progress of heresy. But these wars, so disastrous to the pope and the patrimony of St. Peter, proved an inestimable blessing to thousands of

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<sup>335</sup> *History of the Reformation in Italy*, p. 29.

precious souls. Many of the German soldiers who followed Charles V in his Italian expeditions, and the Swiss auxiliaries who followed the standard of his great rival, Francis I, were Protestants. "With the freedom of men," says Dr. McCrie, "who have swords in their hands, these foreigners conversed on the religious controversy with the inhabitants among whom they were quartered."

The impressions made on the people's mind, in favour of the new opinions, were greatly strengthened by the bitter and never-ending contests between the pope and the Emperor. We have seen Charles by turns an abettor of the pope, and a restraint on his authority as the fluctuations of his contest with Francis I rendered it politic; but with the deceitfulness of Clement VII he was maddened to fury. He accused the pope of kindling the flames of war in Europe that he might evade, what was universally called for, a general council for the Reformation of the church in its head and members. It was at this time that he threatened to abolish the jurisdiction of the pope throughout Spain; but, not satisfied with these threatenings, he sent an army into the papal territories under the command of his general, the Duke of Bourbon. Rome was besieged and sacked, and the pontiff taken prisoner, in the year 1527. "The Germans in the Emperor's army behaved with great moderation towards the inhabitants of Rome after the first day's pillage and contented themselves with testifying their detestation of idolatry; but the Spaniards never relented in their rapacity and cruelty, torturing the prisoners to make them discover their treasures." Marching up to the palace windows of the captive pontiff, a whole band of Germans, raising their hands and voices, exclaimed, "**Long live Pope Luther! Long live Pope Luther!**"

Thus were the hands of the pope and his counsellors filled with their own troubles, and the Reformers left tolerably free to pursue their happy work of conversion and instruction, by the good providence of God.

### **THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS**

It was not until the year 1542 that the court of Rome became seriously alarmed at the progress of the Reformed doctrines. By this time they were widely spread in nearly every province of Italy. Some of the most attractive and brilliant preachers in that country had embraced the simple gospel and were preaching to large audiences a free salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Among these, Bernardino Ochino, a Capuchin, Peter Martyr, a canon-regular of the order of St. Augustine, and the interesting Aonio **Paleario**, a pious and learned professor. Spies were set to watch their movements, listen to their sermons, and even then provoke conversation, with the view of procuring evidence against them. Ochino and Martyr saw their safety in flight, crossed the Alps, found an asylum in Switzerland, and ultimately in England; but the career of Paleario was crowned with martyrdom in his own country.

When asked by his accusers, 'What is the first means of salvation given by God to man?' he answered, 'Christ.' 'What is the second?' he replied, 'Christ.' 'And what is the third?' he again answered, 'Christ.' From that moment, having rejected good works as the second means, and the church as the third, he was a doomed man. But that which gave the greatest offence was a most influential treatise which he wrote on the *Benefit of the Death of Christ*. When the Inquisitor at length arose to crush the Lutherans and collect their heretical books, as many as *forty thousand* copies of this book fell into his hands. Paleario was at last condemned on four charges: 1, For denying purgatory, 2, For disapproving of the dead being buried in churches; 3, For ridiculing the monastic life; 4, For ascribing justification solely to confidence in the mercy of God forgiving our sins through Jesus Christ. After an imprisonment of three years in the dungeons of the Inquisition, his body was given to the flames in the year 1570, and in the seventieth year of his age.

His sufferings were soon over and they would all soon be forgotten in the unmingled blessedness of his Lord's presence, but the fruit of his faithful testimony will endure for ever. Who could estimate the effects, with God's blessing, of forty thousand copies of his book in the hands of the Italians? But the fruit will all appear on that morning without clouds, and like Paul with his beloved Thessalonians, he will find his Italians to be his joy and crown of rejoicing, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. What a mercy to the called of God, sustained by His grace, and enabled to witness for Him in any age and in every sphere of life! Time will soon be over, the Lord will soon be here, and bright will the future be of all that have been faithful to Him. But His threatenings will be as surely executed as His promises will be fulfilled. It has ever been the policy of Rome to destroy the character, abolish the memory, and blot out the very names of those whose lives she has taken away. But their record is on high; and all that has been of grace will be revealed in the light to the utter confounding, and eternal shame and anguish of their once haughty inquisitors. And their remembrance in hell of the perfect happiness of their innocent but helpless victims, must give vitality to the worm that never dies and vehemence to the flames that will never be quenched.

A number of excellent men, whose only crime was their love to the Lord Jesus, and their faith in His word, suffered about the same time as Paleario. Commissioned spies, in the pay of the Vatican, were dispersed over Italy, who insinuated themselves into private families, and the confidence of individuals, conveying the information which they obtained to the inquisitors. Assuming a variety of characters, they were to be found in the company of the rich and the poor, the learned and illiterate. Many excellent private persons were thus caught in the toils spread by these pests of society. In a short time the prisons of the Inquisition were filled with victims, including persons of noble birth, male and female, industrious mechanics, and many of good reputation for learning and piety. Multitudes were condemned to penance, the galleys, and

the flames. To give even an outline of the imprisonments, tortures, and deaths among the Italian Protestants, would be to write a martyrology.

“Englishmen,” Dr. McCrie observes, “were peculiarly obnoxious to the inquisitors. Dr. Thomas Wilson, afterwards secretary to **Queen Elizabeth**, was accused of heresy, and thrown into the prisons of the Inquisition at Rome, on account of some things which were contained in his books on logic and rhetoric. He made his escape in consequence of his prison doors being broken open during the tumult which took place at the death of Pope Paul IV. Among those who escaped by this occurrence was also John Craig, one of our Reformers, who lived to draw up the National Covenant, in which Scotland solemnly abjured the popish religion. Dr. Thomas Reynolds was less fortunate. In consequence of being subjected to the torture, he died in prison. In the year 1595, two persons were burnt alive in Rome, the one an Englishman, the other a native of Silesia. “But enough for the present of these details of misery. A brief notice of those who fled for their lives and liberties, will give the reader some idea of the great and blessed work of God’s Holy Spirit in Italy during the sixteenth century. Perhaps in no country in Europe did the word of God so prevail from 1520 to 1550, as in that land of blind superstition, luxury, and licentiousness. Such is the mercy of our God; where sin abounds grace much more abounds, to His praise and glory. “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 6:37)

### **ITALIAN EXILES**

Surely no truer testimony can be given to the reality and power of our religious convictions, than a readiness to leave our homes and all that is dear to us, in obedience to the word of God and the dictates of conscience. The very sight of a number of foreigners, male and female, reaching our shores as exiles, would produce an impression highly favourable to the refugees, and deeply interesting to those among whom they had sought an asylum. Such were the Italian exiles, and such the impression produced, not only on their fellow Protestants, but on their adversaries the Roman Catholics. They could not understand how men of illustrious birth, rank, learning, position, civil and ecclesiastical, could voluntarily renounce their wealth and honours, leave their dearest friends, encounter poverty with all the hardships and dangers of a speedy flight, rather than do violence to the voice of conscience.

The **republic of the Grisons**, owing to its proximity to Italy, was the country they first visited. “It was calculated that, in the year 1550, the exiles amounted to two hundred, of whom a fourth or fifth part were men of letters, and those not of the meanest name. Before the year 1559 the number had increased to eight hundred. From that time to the year 1568 we have ground to believe that the increase was fully as great in proportion; and down to the close of the century, individuals were to be seen, after short intervals, flying to the north, and throwing themselves on glaciers of the Alps to escape the

fires of the Inquisition.” Happily for the exiles, and for the Grisons themselves, the Reformation had made such progress there, that a statute law was passed, as early as 1526, securing religious liberty to all classes in the republic. In a national diet it was moved and agreed to, “That it shall be free to all persons of both sexes, and of whatever condition or rank, within the territories of the Grison confederation, to choose, embrace, and profess either the Roman Catholic or the Evangelical religion; and that no one shall, publicly or privately, harass another with reproaches or odious speeches on account of his religion, under an arbitrary penalty. That the ministers of religion shall teach nothing to the people but what is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and what they can prove by them; and that parish priests shall be enjoined to give themselves assiduously to the study of the scriptures as the only rule of faith and manners.” This noble statute, notwithstanding some attempts that have been made to overthrow it, remains to this day the charter of religious liberty in the canton of the Grisons.

Many of the inhabitants in that part of Switzerland, who had come originally from Italy, and had preserved their ancient language and manners, were like a people ready for the ministrations of the exiles. And these, finding themselves perfectly free and safe, grudged no labour in communicating instruction privately and publicly, and were blessed of God to the winning of many souls for Christ. Congregations were formed, pastors appointed, the Lord’s supper celebrated, and worship conducted on the principle of the Reformed churches. Others of the exiles made themselves masters of the different languages of the canton that they might be able to preach the gospel to the inhabitants. Their preaching was of the most attractive and thrilling style. They detailed the cruelties of the Inquisition; they laid bare the artifices, the superstition, ignorance, vices, and corruption of the court of Rome and its priesthood, contrasting with great enthusiasm the liberty of conscience and the pure preaching of the gospel enjoyed in the Grisons.

Thus did Rome, by her short-sighted and cruel policy, reduce her own strength at home, and send forth a band of her choicest subjects to expose her wickedness, weaken her influence abroad, and instruct many in the way of salvation. After a time many of these exiles spread themselves over the other cantons, and passed into other countries, carrying the light of the gospel with them; but alas, alas, their native and sunny Italy was doomed to be the abode of darkness, for few of the disciples of the Reformed doctrines were able to survive the barbarous and fiendish malice of the Inquisition.<sup>336</sup>

## SPAIN

The term **heresy**, about the time of the Reformation, was held in the highest detestation by the Spanish nation. The loudest boast of the proud Spaniard was

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<sup>336</sup> For full details see Dr. McCrie’s *History*; Miss Young’s *Life and Times of Paleario*, 2 vols., D’Aubigné’s *History of the Reformation in Europe*. vol. 4; Hardwick’s *Church History*, p. 105.

purity of blood. The poorest peasant looked upon it as a degradation to have a drop of Jewish or Moorish blood in his veins. Yet in no country in Europe had there been such an intermixture of races. But this pride of a pure old Christian, or holy Catholic, ancestry made them peculiarly jealous of all forms of worship except their own. Besides, they had succeeded in cleansing the land by expelling the Jews, the inveterate enemies of Christ, from their courts; and they had overthrown the Mahometan empire which had been established for ages in the fairest provinces of their land; and would they now be traitors to the cross under which they had conquered and renounce their ancient faith for some new opinions of an obscure German monk? Their successes at home, with their wonderful discoveries abroad, so increased the wealth and raised the reputation of Spain, that they began to think themselves the favourites of heaven, and destined to propagate and defend the true faith throughout their vast dominions.

To the **discovery of America** by Columbus, the other magnificent territories by navigators of lesser name, must be added, the vast increase of strength which the Spanish monarchy received by the succession of their youthful sovereign, Charles V, to his paternal dominions in the Low Countries, Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary, and his elevation to the imperial throne of Germany.

### **THE INTRODUCTION OF THE REFORMED DOCTRINES INTO SPAIN**

Such was the greatness and glory of the Spanish nation when the new faith knocked at her gates for admission. But notwithstanding the national antipathy to the German Reformation, there were many serious and thoughtful men predisposed in its favour. The scandalous corruptions of the clergy and the cruel energies of the Inquisition had alienated the hearts of many from the old religion. Accordingly, we find the writings of Luther translated and distributed in the peninsula as early as the year 1519. The Reformer's commentary on the Galatians, a work which exhibits his doctrinal sentiments on the most important points, was translated into Spanish in 1520. This was followed by translations of his treatise on Christian Liberty, and his reply to Erasmus on free-will. These books were read and approved of by many who were illustrious for their rank, learning, and influence; and had not the throne and the Inquisition combined to suppress both the books and their readers, Spain, we believe, would have produced a noble band of thorough reformers. For the first ten years at least, the papal briefs and the state authorities seemed ineffectual in arresting its progress.

“Headed by two brothers,” says Hardwick, “Juan and Alfonso de Valdes, the reforming school increased from day to day in numbers and importance. It had representatives among the retinue of Charles V himself; and both in Seville and Valladolid the crowd of earnest Lutherans was so great that cells could hardly be at last procured for their incarceration.” Many noble

witnesses for the gospel follow these two leading brothers, down to the year 1530, when Charles, with a great body of Spanish nobles and clergy, had an opportunity of hearing for themselves the true doctrines of the Protestants, from the confession of faith which was read to the imperial diet of Augsburg. The public reading and examination of this confession had the effect of dissipating the false ideas of the opinions of Luther which had been industriously propagated by the monks. Alfonso de Valdes, the Emperor's secretary, of whom we have already spoken, had several friendly interviews with Melancthon, and read the confession before it was presented to the diet. A. de Virves, chaplain to Charles, was also convinced of the truth of the protest and became what was called a Lutheran. Valdes, Virves, and others on their return to Spain being suspected of Lutheranism, were seized by the inquisitors and thrown into prison. A long list of nobles, priests, burgesses, monks, and nuns follow, but for details of their imprisonment, tortures, and death, we have no space.<sup>337</sup>

### **THE SUPPRESSION OF THE REFORMATION IN SPAIN**

For a number of years the Lord in mercy sheltered the **infant church in Spain**. The Christians were in the habit of coming together with great secrecy, and breaking bread in private houses. On no other principle could we account for the truth spreading, the disciples multiplying, and the church being edified, and all in the very place where the king, the pope, and the Inquisition had sworn to keep Spain Roman Catholic. True, there were many individual cases of persecution and imprisonment, but nothing very definite, or on a large scale, was attempted till the year 1557.

The first thing which seems to have aroused the inquisitors from their security was the sudden disappearance of a number of persons, who were known to have settled in Geneva and different parts of Germany, where they were at liberty to worship God according to His holy word. This led to searching inquiries as to the cause of their departure; and, finding it was the question of religion, the inquisitors naturally suspected that those who had left were not the only persons who were disaffected, and immediately set their whole police in motion to discover their brethren who remained behind. Besides their vigilance at home, spies were sent to Geneva and Germany, that they might, through feigning themselves to be friends, obtain information as to those who had embraced Lutheranism.

This information, it is painful to relate, was obtained by the treachery of one of the preachers' wives through the wicked arts of the confessional. At Valladolid, **Juan Garcia**, a goldsmith, being aware of the influence of the priest over the superstitious mind of his wife, concealed from her both the time and place of their assembling. But this poor deluded woman, in

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<sup>337</sup> See Brief Account of the Inquisition, "Short Papers," Chapter 26: "The History of the Inquisition", "The Internal Proceedings of the Inquisition" and "The Application of Torture". Llorente's *History of the Inquisition*. McCrie's *History of the Reformation in Spain*.

obedience to her harlot-mother Jezebel, dogged her husband one night, and having ascertained the place of meeting, communicated the fact to the priest. Having made this important discovery, messengers were despatched to the several tribunals throughout the kingdom; the ramifications of heresy were to be diligently traced, guards were to be placed at convenient places to seize such persons as might attempt to escape; and by a simultaneous movement the Protestants were seized in all parts of the country. In Seville and its neighbourhood, two hundred persons were apprehended in one day; and, in a short time, the number increased to eight hundred. In Valladolid eighty persons were committed to prison, and similar numbers by other tribunals. The common prisons, the convents, and even private houses were crowded with the victims. The storm of persecution burst with equal fury on the monasteries and nunneries that were known to favour the Lutheran doctrines.

The cruel and heartless king, Philip II and his inquisitors, were now determined to strike terror into the minds of the whole nation, and consequently, the unoffending prisoners were treated with the view of accomplishing this fiendish end. Many suffered in body and mind from a long imprisonment; others from the severity of the tortures ended their days by a lingering and secret martyrdom; while some of the most distinguished, either for rank, or of the clerical order, were reserved for a public execution, or the Spanish auto-da-fe.<sup>338</sup> But there was one family amongst the Protestants of Seville whose tragic history is so touching that we cannot withhold it from our readers.

“The widow of **Fernando Nugnez**, a native of the town of Lepe, with three of her daughters and a married sister, were seized and thrown into prison. As there was no evidence against them, they were put to the torture, but refused to inform against one another. Upon this the presiding Inquisitor called one of the young women into the audience chamber, and, after conversing with her for some time, professed an attachment to her person. Having repeated this at another interview, he told her that he could be of no service to her unless she imparted to him the whole facts of her case; but if she entrusted him with these, he would manage the affairs in such a way as that she and all her friends would be set at liberty. Falling into the snare, the unsuspecting girl confessed to him, that she had at different times conversed with her mother, sisters, and aunt, on the Lutheran doctrines. The wretch immediately brought her into court, and obliged her to declare judicially what she had owned to him in private. Nor was this all: under the pretence that her confession was not sufficiently ample and ingenuous, she was put to the torture by the most excruciating engines — the pulley and the wooden horse; by which means evidence was extorted from her, which led, not only to the condemnation of

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<sup>338</sup> See Chapter 26: “The Auto-da-Fe”.

herself and her relatives, but also to the seizure and conviction of others who afterwards perished in the flames.”<sup>339</sup>

No language could describe the meanness, perfidiousness fiendishness, of one in human form that could do such a thing, and the reader may easily imagine from the treatment of the widow, the fatherless children, and the aunt, what the victims of the Inquisition (which could be counted by thousands) had to endure, and all for the crime of believing the truth of God and rejecting the lies of Satan.

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE POLICY OF SPAIN**

It is difficult to conceive in our day, and in our land of civil and religious liberty, what could have induced the church aided by the government, to persecute thousands of the choicest of her members, for a difference of opinion on some points of religion. By far the greater part of those who were apprehended, and thrown into a dungeon, or were burnt at the stake, had not left the communion of the Romish church. They might have accepted a New Testament in the Spanish language, or might have been drawn into conversation on the subject of the new opinions, either of which was sufficient to awaken the suspicion of the Familiars, and secure them imprisonment. We must look deeper down than the blind and infatuated policy of the government, or the tyranny of the papal tribunals. The source is purely Satanic. The main object of this suicidal policy was to perpetuate the reign of darkness. Popery could not live in the light; therefore the true gospel — which ameliorates the condition of society, generates a spirit of liberty among the people, discerns and corrects abuses by its sure and divine light — must be suppressed, no matter what it may cost.

The arch-enemy of God and man rules in the darkness and superstition of popery, though at the same time God overrules. He saw from the beginning that society, in all countries where the Reformation had been received, was greatly improved and enlightened. It gave a higher tone to morals, and imparted to the human mind a strong impulse of inquiry and improvement. The progress of useful knowledge, the cultivation of literature, and the extension of commerce, which exalt a nation, would be the downfall of the papal power. Therefore every movement, intellectual, civil, or religious, that would tend to raise the condition, or enlighten the minds of the people, must be put down. The ruling clergy and the inquisitors exercise the most rigid and vigilant inspection of the press and the seminaries of education, that they may arrest the progress of general or useful knowledge. This is abundantly proved by the lists of prohibited books which they publish from time to time.

As the persecution grew hotter, the number of exiles increased. While the Italians were crossing the Alps, the Spaniards were crossing the Pyrenees, and not infrequently met in the country of their adoption, and even united in the

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<sup>339</sup> McCrie, p. 130.

same church. Thousands of the **Spanish exiles** found a happy home in England, which the Lord has not forgotten. But the kindness which they received here gave great offence to the bloodthirsty Philip and the pope, and formed one of the charges against Elizabeth in the bull of her excommunication. Philip wanted them to be sent back, not for their capital or labour as useful citizens, but for their blood, that he might celebrate another victory in a grand auto-da-fe. But England on this occasion proved worthy of her well-known character for hospitality to the oppressed.

“The queen,” nobly writes bishop Jewell, “of her gracious pity, granted them harbour. Is it become a heinous thing to show mercy? God willed the children of Israel to love the stranger, because they were strangers in the land of Egypt. He that showeth mercy shall find mercy. But what was the number of such who came in unto us? *Three or four thousand*. Thanks be to God; this realm is able to receive them if the numbers were greater. And why may not Queen Elizabeth receive a few afflicted members of Christ, which are compelled to carry His cross? Whom, when He thought good to bring safely by the dangers of the sea, and to set in at our havens, should we cruelly have driven them back again?... Would the vicar of Christ give this counsel? Or, if a king receive such, and give them succour, they live not idly. If they take houses of us, they pay rent for them; they hold not our grounds but by making due recompense. They beg not in our streets, nor crave anything at our hands, but to breathe our air, and see our sun. They labour truly, they live sparefully; they are good examples of virtue, travail, faith, and patience. The towns in which they abide are happy, for God doth follow them with His blessing.”

The reader will now see, what has so greatly interested us, that the work of God’s Spirit in Catholic Spain must indeed have been a great and a blessed work. If we think of the thousands who became the victims of the Inquisition, and the thousands who found a refuge in England, besides those who settled in Switzerland, Germany, the Low Countries, and France, how great indeed must the work of the Spirit, by means of the scanty truth which they possessed, have been; and that, too, in a very short time! Towards the close of the century Spain boasted that she had extirpated the German heresy from her territories. But she saw not in her blindness, that she had inflicted a deeper and more fatal wound on herself than on the unoffending victims of her tyranny, and had sown the seeds of a national misery and despotism which she has been reaping ever since.

During the early part of the sixteenth century, her sceptre extended over nearly half the world, but what is her condition now? Prostrate, sunk, and degraded, compared with the other nations of Europe. **Holland**, with no land

but what she rescued from the ocean, became rich and independent, while **Spain**, with all her vast possessions, has become poor and helpless.<sup>340</sup>

How true it is, not only with individuals but with nations, that, “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” This is the principle of the government of God, however much grace may overrule the failure of the Christian for his blessing; as in the case of David. Nevertheless the sword was not to depart from his house. “Be not deceived,” says the apostle, “God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” This is a hard saying, many will say, yet it is most true and righteous. If a man sow tares in the spring, can he expect to reap wheat in the autumn? And if he sow wheat, he will not have to reap tares. But, thank God, grace reigns, not on the ruins of law and justice, but “through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” No thanks be to us when our failures turn to our deeper blessing, but to the grace of God which freely meets us on the ground of the finished work of Christ. When self is judged, the will broken, the eye of faith fixed on the blessed Lord, there is not only peace, but joy, through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Gal. 6:7; Rom. 5:21)

### **THE NETHERLANDS**

For some time before the days of Luther, there had existed in the **Netherlands** a spirit of religious inquiry, and a calm but firm resistance to the domination of the Romish church. In the fifteenth century, a school of pious mystics, represented by such men as Thomas a Kempis, had revived a spirit of devotion in many countries of the west, especially in Flanders and some parts of Germany.<sup>341</sup> It was also the land of John Wessel, who, in many things, anticipated Luther, and of Erasmus, at a later period. Most of the Reformers' books, both Swiss and Saxon, were translated, printed, and sent out from Antwerp in large quantities. The provinces were wealthy and prosperous from their extensive manufactures and commerce. Antwerp was, in that age, the emporium of the world. Hence their great facility in sending books into all parts, by concealing them in their bales of goods. It was from Antwerp chiefly, that both Italy and Spain received the new books. The writings of Erasmus against the monks may also have helped to prepare the way for the deeper doctrines of Luther and Zwingli. It was only natural, we may say, under these circumstances, that the light of the Reformation should have penetrated the Low Countries at an early period.

### **THE POLICY OF CHARLES**

Such was the state of things in the hereditary dominions of Charles when he ascended the throne of Spain in 1519. Indeed, the movement which convulsed the whole of Germany, was early transmitted to all the other territories of the Emperor. Being a Catholic king, this fact was no doubt the cause of his double

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<sup>340</sup> See Dr. McCrie's history — Blackwood, Edinburgh.

<sup>341</sup> Hardwick's *Middle Ages*, p. 372.

policy towards the Reformers from the Diet of Worms in 1521. With Francis I, the pope, and the Turks watching his movements on every side, and he theirs, he had no leisure to chastise the heretics. Besides, the ample revenues, which flowed into the imperial treasury from those wealthy provinces, made him unwilling to resort to severe measures, with a view to check the progress of the new opinions. At the same time, he did not fail to exhort those in power to use their authority in suppressing heresy. This is evident from a placard which was published in the name of that monarch, by Margaret of Austria, his father's sister, Governess of the Netherlands, in the year 1521. Luther is there described as a "devil in the shape of a man and the habit of a monk, that he may more easily occasion the eternal death and destruction of mankind." The placard is very long, giving strict orders for the prohibition of all books which contained any allusion to the scripture or its doctrines, and that no book was to be circulated without the approbation of the faculty of divinity in the university.<sup>342</sup>

### THE TRUTH PREVAILS IN SPITE OF THE FLAMES

The history of the **Low Countries** from this time is so full of martyrdoms, that it is like a gradual extermination of the population. Nevertheless the Spirit of God wrought wonderfully, and the holy courage which was shown by many, proved the Lord's presence with them in sustaining grace and power. It was discovered that the Austin friars in the city of Antwerp had read and approved the books of Luther. Many of them were thrown into prison. Three of the monks were degraded and condemned to the flames in 1523. While the fire was being lighted, they repeated the creed, and then sang together the Te Deum in alternate verses, until the force of the flames silenced their heavenly praise. Erasmus is made to witness on this occasion, that these martyrdoms had the very opposite effect which the persecutors intended. "The city of Brussels," where they were executed, he says, "had been perfectly free from heresy till this event. But many of the inhabitants immediately after began to favour Lutheranism."

Persons of eminence, among both the clergy and the laity, ventured to espouse the cause of truth, though the martyrdoms were constantly occurring. This has always been the case. If persecution keep some at a cold selfish distance, it brings the accession of a greater number, through that instinct — in connection with the truth — which impels the human conscience to rise against injustice, and incline to the side of the oppressed. The fires were now kindled all over the country, and edict following edict, with increasing severity, kept them burning. It was death to read a page of the scriptures,

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<sup>342</sup> See the noble work of Gerard Brandt, on the Reformation in the Netherlands, in four vols. folio. There the reader has almost the daily occurrences of these most interesting and tragic times.

See also *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, by Mr. Motley, three vols. 8vo; also his book on *The United Netherlands*. Both embrace the political as well as the ecclesiastical history of these times.

death to discuss any article of the faith; death to have in one's possession any of the writings of Luther, Zwingli, or Œcolampadius, death to express a doubt respecting the efficacy of the sacraments, or the authority of the pope. In the year 1536, that good and faithful servant of the Lord, William Tyndale, was strangled and burnt at Vilvordi, near Brussels, for translating the New Testament into English and printing it in 1535.<sup>343</sup>

In the year 1555, Charles, though only fifty-five years of age, feeling himself growing old, passed the sceptre to his son. The sceptre and the faggot, it has been said, were closely united during the reign of the father, but they were to be still more so under the reign of the son. And there was this difference: Charles persecuted from policy, for he was burning heretics at the very time he sacked Rome, and imprisoned the pope and his cardinals. Philip persecuted from the convictions of his bigotry, and the cool vindictiveness of his nature. It was under the reign of the latter that more violent exterminating measures were devised and carried into execution by the duke of Alva, and the persecution became so intolerable, and so exasperated the people, that they ultimately rebelled, threw off the Spanish yoke, and asserted their ancient laws and liberties. But this was not done in haste; the people were slow to move, notwithstanding their unparalleled sufferings.

### **THE ASSOCIATION OF THE NOBLES**

In 1566 most of the nobles, though generally Catholics, entered into an association to protect and defend the liberties of the country. The Protestants, trusting to a promise of toleration from Margaret, began to meet in great numbers in open day; and, being without places of worship they assembled in the fields, where the preachers proclaimed the truths of the gospel in the midst of overwhelming numbers. One of these field preachers, named Dathen, is said to have gathered as many as fifteen thousand at a time to listen to his discourses. But in the existing state of things such assemblies were not likely to be continued without some disturbances. A magistrate, on one occasion, furious in his bigotry, attempted to disperse them, brandishing his sword, and making as if he would apprehend the minister, but was saluted with such a plentiful shower of stones that he barely escaped with his life. The psalms of David were usually sung on such occasions; which, from the multitude of voices, were heard at a great distance, and attracted great attention. The enthusiasm of the Calvinists and the hostility of the Catholics were thereby increased, and the danger of an outbreak became every day more imminent. In order to avoid this, and prevent the need of field-preaching, those who really knew and valued the truth had, in a short time, a number of wooden churches erected. "Men of all classes engaged in the labour, while the females sold their jewels and ornaments to provide the necessary funds; and, had they

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<sup>343</sup> For particulars, see *Annals of the English Bible* by Christopher Anderson; also the biographical notice, prefixed to his writings published by the Parker Society.

been left to themselves, the power of the religion they professed would soon have quieted the storm of passion, and healed the evils of the land.”<sup>344</sup>

The Protestants, now **one hundred thousand in number** respectfully petitioned the king for toleration, having been led by the Governess, Margaret, to expect it. By taking advantage of the brief period of repose from the conciliatory spirit of the Governess, they had formed nearly sixty congregations in Flanders, which were attended by nearly as many thousand persons. Similar meetings were opened in Artois, Brabant, Holland, Utrecht, Iceland, Friesland, and other places. But in place of listening to the reasonable demands of so large and so respectable a body of his subjects, the poor narrow-minded bigot utterly rejected the plea for “freedom to worship God, and personal liberty by settled law.” Margaret had recommended moderate measures, and, when the question came before his own ministers, the Spanish council did the same, but all was in vain: violence, duplicity, and bloodshed were the only features of his policy, especially in the Netherlands. Rejecting Margaret’s advice as to moderation; he directed her to raise an army of *three thousand horse*, and *ten thousand foot soldiers*, to enforce the execution of his decrees.

Attempts were now made by the government to disperse the congregations of the Protestants by force, so that the people went armed to their places of worship. Such was the melancholy state of things through the superstition and obstinacy of a single man. Many from amongst the lowest classes of the people in different parts of the country, excited by all that was going on, began to rise. They broke into churches, tore down pictures and everything in the way of ornament; images, altars, crosses, and stained windows, were broken to pieces; and the organ in the cathedral at Antwerp, said to be the finest in the world, was subjected to the same destructive enthusiasm. About four hundred churches were thus plundered and defaced in a few days. The Christians in both the reformed and Lutheran churches were deeply grieved because of this outbreak, and drew up remonstrances to Philip; and while they condemned those violent proceedings, they again petitioned for the public exercise of their religion, “in which they were resolved to live and die.” The prince of Orange, the counts Egmont and Horn, endeavoured to move Philip to some consideration of the state of religious feeling in the Low Countries; but it was all to no purpose. The troops were ordered to be distributed over the distracted country, that his persecuting edicts might be enforced. The Protestants were reduced to great straits; many were put to death, and many fled the country; the association of the nobles melted away, and the Netherlands had all the appearance of a conquered land.

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<sup>344</sup> *Universal History*, vol. 6, p. 197.

## THE DUKE OF ALVA

But the cold-hearted bigot was not yet satisfied. A second invasion was arranged for exterminating the Reformed, tens of thousands though they were. In the year 1567 the cruel **duke of Alva** was sent into the Netherlands with an army of fifteen thousand Spaniards and Italians; and the Inquisition was to put forth all its energies. This added greatly to the general consternation. The reign of terror began. The very name of Alva, and the mention of the Inquisition, made the whole land shudder. The counts of Egmont and Horn, and other persons of eminence, suspected of holding liberal opinions, were immediately arrested and executed. The prince of Orange escaped to Germany, and crowds of Protestants forsook their homes and fled to other countries. The foreign merchants, manufacturers, and artisans fled from Antwerp and other once thriving cities, as if the plague were raging within their gates. The wooden churches were pulled down, and, in some places the beams were formed into a great gallows on which to hang the minister and his flock.

As the inquisitors, by the authority of Charles, before his abdication were doing their dreadful work, we will give particulars of a few cases, to show the reader what was to be witnessed almost daily in the country for nearly forty years; yet the word of God prevailed mightily, and thousands were converted.

One of the inquisitors by the name of **Titelmann** notorious for the number of his victims, boasted that he only “seized the virtuous and the innocent, because they made no resistance.” Thomas Calberg, tapestry weaver, of Tournay, being convicted of having copied some hymns from a book printed in Geneva, was instantly burned alive. About the same time, 1561, Walter Kapell, a man of property and benevolence, and greatly beloved by the poor people, was burned at the stake for heretical opinions. A most touching scene occurred as Titelmann’s officers were binding him to the stake: a poor idiot, who had often been fed by his kindness, called out, “Ye are bloody murderers; that man has done no wrong, but has given me bread to eat.” With these words he cast himself headlong into the flames to perish with his beloved benefactor, and was with difficulty rescued by the officers. A day or two afterwards he visited the scene of the execution, where the half-burnt skeleton of Walter Kapell still remained. The poor idiot laid it upon his shoulders, and carried it to the place where the magistrates were sitting in session. Forcing his way into their presence, he laid his burden at their feet, crying, “There, murderers! Ye have eaten his flesh, now eat his bones.” The fate of the poor man is not recorded but the testimony of so daring a witness would most likely be effectually silenced.

The year following, Titelmann caused one Robert Ogier, of Ryssel, in Flanders, to be arrested, together with his wife and two sons. Their crime consisted in not going to mass, and in practising private worship at home. They confessed the offence, for they protested that they could not endure to

see the profanation of their Saviour's name in the idolatrous sacraments. They were asked what rites they practised in their own house. One of the sons, a mere boy, answered, "We fall on our knees, and pray to God that He may enlighten our hearts and forgive our sins. We pray for our sovereign, that his reign may be prosperous, and his life peaceful. We also pray for the magistrates and others in authority, that God may protect and preserve them all." The boy's simple eloquence drew tears even from the eyes of some of his judges. The father and eldest son, were, however, condemned to the flames. "O God," prayed the youth at the stake, "eternal Father, accept the sacrifice of our lives, in the name of Thy beloved Son." "Thou liest, scoundrel!" furiously interrupted a monk who was lighting the fire; "God is not your father; ye are the devil's children." As the flames rose about them, the boy cried out once more, "Look, my father, all heaven is opening, and I see a hundred thousand angels rejoicing over us. Let us be glad, for we are dying for the truth." "Thou liest! thou liest!" again screamed the priest "all hell is opening; and ye see ten thousand devils thrusting you into eternal fire." Eight days afterwards, the wife of Ogier and his other son were burned; so that they were soon privileged to meet in the bright and happy regions above — in the perfect repose of the paradise of God. Little did these ignorant and hardened inquisitors think that they were sending so many of the children of God home to their Father's house on high, to be with Christ, which is far better.

### **THE ADMINISTRATION OF ALVA**

In the year 1567 "**the council of blood**," as it was called, held its first sitting. There are few readers who have not heard something of the infamous character of Alva. "Such an amount of ferocity," says Motley, "of patient vindictiveness and universal bloodthirstiness was never found in a savage beast of the forest, and but rarely in a human bosom." It was no longer the trial of ones and twos that occupied the council, as it was thought more expeditious to send the accused at once in large numbers to the flames. But no crime at that moment was so great as being rich. No belief, no virtues, could expiate such guilt. Bloodshed and confiscations were the daily amusements of the tyrant who thus gratified his avarice and his cruelty. He boasted that a golden river, a yard deep, should flow through the Netherlands, from confiscations, to replenish the treasury of his master. In the town of Tournay alone, the estates of above a hundred rich merchants were confiscated.

Blood now flowed in torrents. "Thus, for example, on the 4th of January, eighty-four inhabitants of Valenciennes were condemned; on another day, ninety-five from different places in Flanders; on another, forty-six inhabitants of Malines; on another, thirty-five persons from different localities. Yet, notwithstanding this wholesale slaughter, Philip, Alva, and the Holy Office were not satisfied with the progress of events. A new edict was issued, affixing a heavy penalty upon all waggoners carriers, and ship-masters, who should aid in the emigration of heretics. They had resolved that none should escape.

Early in the second year of *the council of blood*, “the most sublime sentence of death,” says Motley, “was promulgated, which has ever been pronounced since the creation of the world. The Roman tyrant wished that his enemies' heads were all upon a single neck, that he might strike them off at one blow. The Inquisition assisted Philip to place the heads of all his Netherland subjects upon a single neck for the same fell purpose. Upon the 19th of February 1568 a sentence of the Holy Office condemned *all the inhabitants* of the Netherlands to death as heretics. From this universal doom *only a few persons, especially named*, were excepted. A proclamation of the king, dated ten days later, confirmed this decree of the inquisition, and ordered it to be carried into instant execution, without regard to age, sex, condition. This is probably the most concise death-warrant that was ever framed. Three millions of people — men, women, and children, were sentenced to the scaffold in three lines.”<sup>345</sup>

“This horrible decree,” says Brandt, “against a whole nation, drove many with their wives and children to seek a place of safety in the *West-woods* of Flanders, from whence turning savages through the solitude of the place, and the extinction of their hopes, they made excursions on the priests and friars, serving themselves of the darkest nights for revenge and robbery.”

### THE REAL CHARACTER OF POPERY

Under this universal condemnation the reader will see the real spirit of popery, and what all had to expect who did not yield an absolute, though blind submission, to all her idolatries and superstitions. Men in the highest and humblest positions were daily and hourly dragged to the stake. Alva in writing to Philip about this time, seeks to satisfy his master by assuring him that the executions, which were to take place immediately after the expiration of holy week would not be less than *eight hundred heads*. To prevent the victims on their way to the scaffold from addressing their friends or the bystanders, the tongue of each prisoner was screwed into an iron ring, and then seared with a hot iron.

The tendency of **this monster's policy** was evidently to effect the utter depopulation of the country. History informs us, that the “death-bell tolled hourly in every village; not a family that was not called to mourn for its dearest relatives; the blood of its best and bravest citizens had already stained the scaffold; the men to whom the nation had been accustomed to look for guidance and protection were dead, in prison, or in exile. Submission had ceased to be of any avail flight was impossible, and the spirit of vengeance had alighted at every fireside. The mourners went daily about the streets, for there was hardly a house that had not been made desolate... The door-posts of private houses, the fences in the fields, were laden with human carcasses, strangled, beheaded, and burned. The orchards in the country bore on many a

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<sup>345</sup> Motley, vol. 2, p. 155. Brandt, vol. 1, p. 266.

tree the hideous fruit of human bodies.” It was about this time that Don Carlos, the king’s son, died in prison, or, as it was believed by some, was put to death by his father’s orders. “This conduct of his in not sparing his only son, as being a favourer of heretics, was highly extolled by Pope Pius V.”<sup>346</sup>

Such was the character of the reign of Alva for nearly six years. The heart sickens in attempting to detail the atrocities of this furious tyrant. The extent of the appalling massacres may be imagined from the boast of Alva himself, who gloried in having caused *eighteen thousand* of the inhabitants to perish, without reckoning those who fell in war. And it is thought that more than a *hundred thousand* effected their escape, and fled into other countries. Crowds flocked to the English ports, bringing with them that industrial skill which amply repaid this country for the hospitality they received.

We wonder that the church was not consumed in the flames or drowned in blood. But God had mercy on the Netherlands in preserving many of His faithful witnesses through their fiery trial that they might testify for Him in a future day. When the grass began to grow in the streets of those cities which had recently employed so many artisans, a national synod of the **Dutch Reformed Church** was held at Dort in 1578, at Middleburg in 1581 and at the Hague in 1586. The very means which the royal bigot, with his inquisitors and Jesuits, employed to preserve the old religion, instead of securing it from the dangers to which it was exposed, occasioned its total overthrow. The civil war, which broke out both by sea and land, resulted in the formation of a new Protestant state in Europe, under the title of THE SEVEN UNITED PROVINCES.

### **THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS**

The history of this long and deeply interesting struggle for liberty of conscience belongs to the civil historian. We will only add, that William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, or, as he was usually called, **William “the silent,”** felt impelled to adopt more decisive measures to prevent the utter ruin of his country. In this enterprise he was assisted by Elizabeth, Queen of England; the King of France; and the Protestants in Germany. He also sold his jewels, plate, and even the furniture of his house to raise the necessary funds. But it was difficult to contend with the experience and power of Alva, and for a length of time William was unsuccessful. His brother Louis was defeated, and his brother Adolphus was killed, but many of the towns were thrown into revolt, and Philip at length felt that some change of policy should be tried. Alva was recalled, and even Philip is said to have reproved him for his inhumanity. The war was renewed and continued to rage, with brief intervals of peace, until the year 1580, when the States-general, assembled at Antwerp, issued their declaration of national independence, and threw off the Spanish yoke for ever. Thus the infant republic, under the guidance of the Prince of

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<sup>346</sup> Brandt, vol. 1, p. 270; Motley, vol. 2, p. 142, *Universal History* vol. 6, p. 199.

Orange, secured that freedom of person, and liberty of conscience which are the inalienable right of all; and took its place among the nations of the continent.<sup>347</sup>

Philip now eyed the great patriot with the most deadly hatred. He saw in him the animating soul of these struggles for liberty, and hence he sought his life. “Five unsuccessful attempts had been made to assassinate William, but Philip would not give up hope. In 1580 he published a ban of proscription, in which he denounced the prince as guilty of the foulest crimes, and declared that it was permitted to all persons to assail him in his fortunes, person, and life; and promised *twenty-five thousand golden crowns, a pardon for all offences whatsoever, and a patent of nobility*, to anyone who should deliver up to him this implacable monarch William of Nassau, dead or alive.” This infamous document soon did its work. On the 10th of July, 1584, a Jesuit, named Gerard, who had passed himself off to the unsuspecting prince as one of the Reformed faith, shot him through the heart, in the hall of his own house, with a pistol which he had bought with money obtained from the prince himself a short time before. “God have mercy on my soul, and on this unfortunate nation,” exclaimed the wounded patriot and instantly expired. He had married the widow of Teligny, the daughter of the brave Coligny, who both fell in the St. Bartholomew massacre. Thus had she seen her first and second husband, and her noble father, assassinated by her side.

Thus died one of the most unselfish, wise, courageous, and memorable characters in history. “He had headed the armies of his oppressed countrymen, and led them on to victory, he had regulated their treaties, and though for twenty years he had spent his fortune, his ease, and his health, for the common good, calumny has failed to show that he had in any instance used his power for any selfish purpose; so that he well deserves the title of ‘Father of his country.’” The news of the atrocious deed filled the land and all the surrounding countries with grief and consternation. Vengeance was speedily executed on the assassin; but in the midst of a deep and universal sorrow Philip rejoiced. Transported with joy, he exclaimed, “Had it only been done two years earlier, much trouble would have been spared me; but better late than never! better late than never!”<sup>348</sup>

## **REFLECTIONS ON BIGOTRY AND CHRISTIANITY**

It is difficult to close this paper without drawing the reader’s attention to the **effects of bigotry**, and a bigotry dignified by the name of religion, or zeal for the glory of God. We have seen what this Satanic delusion has done in the Netherlands, and also in many other places. But what has Christianity suffered from bigotry these thirteen hundred years and more! The one is the religion

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<sup>347</sup> For the civil history of the new state, see Motley’s *History of the United Netherlands*, and for the ecclesiastical, see *Faiths of the World*; also Mosheim, vol. 3.

<sup>348</sup> *Universal History*, vol. 6, p. 202; Wylie’s vol. 3, which we have just seen, gives a long and detailed account of the struggles and triumphs in the Netherlands.

of the New Testament, the other that of the dogmas of Rome. The former is peace on earth, and good will to men; for as Christ in Spirit says, "My delights were with the sons of men." What could be sweeter than this — more gracious, more softening, more likely to fill us with love to all men, especially to them that believe? The latter is unfeeling obstinacy, and inexorable cruelty; and this, be it observed, to those whom they deem in error, or unsaved; so that they become the murderers, not only of the body, but of the soul. In place of trying to convert the soul, they hurry it out of this world, proclaiming it unsaved, and only fit for the flames of hell.

Philip stands before us as the personification of the religion of bigotry — the religion of the papacy. Never was there a man more suited for the enemy's purpose than this wretched king — a cold heart, a stern and morose temperament, sullen and gloomy, with an incredibly small mind, and millions of human beings at his mercy. He died in 1598, at the age of seventy-two, after protracted and excruciating sufferings, under a complication of dreadful maladies, said to be Herod's disease.

Our only safety is to have Christ ever before us as our all-governing object; and the more stedfastly we look on Him, the more will His character be mirrored on our souls, and the more distinctly shall we reflect it to others. In looking to Him, we are enlightened; to have any other object before us is to be in darkness, and there are many shades of darkness between the blindness of popish bigotry and the clouds that arise in the Christian's heart from self-occupation. To be true witnesses of a heavenly Christ, we must be heavenly-minded, and heavenly in our ways. And heavenly-mindedness is the result, not of trying to be so, but of occupation with a heavenly Christ, according to the revelation which we have of Him, through the power of the Holy Spirit. In what direction is the eye? is always the important question, for the heart is sure to follow the eye, and the feet the heart.

The following passage may be accepted as a practical view of Christianity, both negatively and positively. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." (Titus 2: 11-14)

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 49

### THE REFORMATION IN FRENCH SWITZERLAND

In tracing the *silver line* of God's grace, in the operations of His Spirit, we are arrested by the different forms it takes in different countries. We have just left a land where the sky was reddened with the flames of martyrdom, and the earth soaked with the blood of God's saints. Such is the history of every land where the Inquisition was established. In Germany — and where it never gained a footing — the struggle was with the princes and the imperial power; but in Switzerland the question of retaining the Romish, or adopting the Reformed faith, was not infrequently decided by vote. This mode of determining the religion of a state strikingly illustrates the popular, or republican character of the Swiss government.

In German Switzerland, the principal Reformers — Zwingle, Ecolampadius, Bullinger, Haller, Wittenbach, and others, were natives; while the agents used of God for the conversion of French-Switzerland, with a single exception, were foreigners. William Farel, a French-man, and almost single-handed, had accomplished the overthrow of popery in several French districts, before he reached Geneva or saw John Calvin. d'Aubigné speaks of Farel as the Luther of French Switzerland, and of Calvin as the Melancthon.

This remarkable man — **William Farel** — was born of a wealthy and noble family at Gap, in Dauphiny, in the year 1489, and diligently instructed by his pious parents in the faithful observance of the devout practices of the Romish church. Naturally sincere, upright, full of ardour, and true to his convictions, he invoked the Virgin and the saints night and day, as he has himself related. He scrupulously conformed to the fasts prescribed by the church, held the pontiff of Rome to be a god upon earth, saw in the priests the sole channel of all celestial blessings, and treated as infidels whoever did not exhibit an ardour similar to his own.<sup>349</sup>

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF WILLIAM FAREL

After attending school for some time in Dauphiny, he obtained the permission of his parents to finish his education at the university of Paris — said to be the mother of all learning, the true light of the church which never knew eclipse. **James Lefevre**, doctor of Etaples, then the most renowned doctor of the Sorbonne, was professor of divinity. His genius, piety, and learning greatly attracted the young Dauphinese. From the centre of the Sorbonne he fearlessly proclaimed, "That true religion has but one foundation, one object, one head

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<sup>349</sup> Felice, p. 18.

— Jesus Christ, blessed for evermore. Let us not,” he continued, “call ourselves by St. Paul, Apollos, or St. Peter. The cross of Christ alone openeth the gates of heaven, and shutteth the gates of hell.” Thus, as early as 1512, the leading doctrines of the Reformation were proclaimed in the presence of the most learned of the Sorbonnists. The university was in a ferment; some applauded, some condemned; and, daily, groups of men met, most anxious to discuss the new doctrines.

But there was one amongst the listening crowds in the lecture room, whose heart the Lord had prepared for the word of life. This was William Farel. His soul was deeply agitated when he heard that salvation comes through faith of Jesus Christ alone, and that works without faith are futile. He thought of the lessons and the habits of his home; his early associations, his tender recollections, his prayers, his hopes. But the declarations of scripture had produced convictions, both deeper and firmer. In his search after truth he studied the word of God in the original tongues, light broke in upon his mind; he saw that it was Jesus only, Jesus only. “Now,” he exclaimed, “everything appears to me in a new aspect; scripture is cleared up; prophecy is opened; the apostles shed a strong light upon my soul. A voice, till now unknown, the voice of Jesus, my Shepherd, my Master, my Teacher, speaks to me with power. Instead of the murderous heart of a ravening wolf, He has given me one of meekness and quietness, so great is the change that has come over me. Now my heart is entirely withdrawn from the pope, and given to Jesus Christ.”

William Farel, so far as we know, was the first person who professed the Reformed religion in France, and was converted in the university at Paris, so renowned for its Romish orthodoxy. Farel and Lefevre conceived for each other the closest friendship, which lasted through life, but we shall meet with them again, when speaking of the Reformation in France. When persecuted in Paris because of their doctrines, William Brissonnet, bishop of Meaux, a pious and pure-minded man, invited them to visit him, and preach the gospel to his people. Numbers came to hear, and when they heard the preachers pressing them to give, not their money to the church, but their hearts to Christ, the surprise and excitement of the inhabitants became extreme. The priests and monks of the diocese, seeing their credit weakening, and their revenues diminishing, aroused the demon of persecution, and the preachers had to preserve their lives by a speedy flight. Farel, on quitting Meaux, went to preach in Dauphiny. “Three of his brothers,” says Felice, “shared his faith. Encouraged by this success, he went preaching from town to town, and place to place. His appeals agitating the whole country, the priests sought to excite the people against him; but he was neither of an age nor of a character to be stopped by persecution; his ardour increased with the danger. Wherever there was a place to plant his foot — on the border of the rivers, on the points of the rocks, in the bed of the torrents — he found one to preach the gospel. If he was threatened, he stood firm; if surrounded, he escaped; if thrust from one spot, he reappeared in another. At last, when he saw himself environed on

all sides, he retreated by mountain paths into Switzerland, and arrived at Basle in the commencement of the year 1524.”

### **FAREL’S PREACHING IN SWITZERLAND**

Having formed an intimate friendship with Bucer, Capito, Œcolampadius, and others, which death only interrupted, he was obliged to leave Basle on account of the hostility of the Roman Catholic clergy. He proceeded to **Montbeliard**, where he laboured with so much zeal and success under the protection of the duke of Ulric, that within two years, the whole principality professed the new opinions; and to this day the inhabitants in general are Protestants. At Neuchatel the opposition was so violent that he remained only a short time. **Aigle** was the next scene of his labours. The town at that time was under the jurisdiction of Berne, and the Bernese government, being favourable to the Reformation, sent him a patent constituting him pastor of Aigle. Thus sanctioned by the powerful government of Berne, he instantly commenced preaching, to the great consternation of the monks, and the delight of many of the people who heard him. “Though he had dropped from the clouds,” says history, “the priests could not have been more affrighted, nor the people more surprised. His bold look, his burning eye, his voice of thunder, his words, rapid, eloquent, and stamped with the majesty of truth, reached the conscience, and increased the number of those in the valley of Aigle, who were already prepared to take the word of God for their guide.”<sup>350</sup>

The priests, and the lower classes who followed them, raised a great tumult, being secretly supported by the Syndic. Farel was insulted in every way in their power, they refused to obey the Bernese in these matters, and were determined to maintain their ancient religion. Many, by this time however, had received the gospel, professed themselves one with Farel, and were ready to defend him. But to prevent the effusion of blood, to which matters were fast tending, Farel quietly withdrew, and preached the gospel in other places which were under the government of Berne. The question however, as usual, came to the vote, and Aigle had a majority in favour of Reform.

In the spring of 1531 Farel returned to **Neuchatel**, determined to complete his conquests there. Since his first visit the Reformed doctrines had made great progress among the people. The priests clamoured as usual and did all in their power to raise a tumult. They sounded the tocsin to rouse the magistrates and the people, as if an invading army had reached their gates. But many gathered round Farel, and forced him to ascend the pulpit of the cathedral in spite of all opposition. His sermon was so powerful, that all the people cried out at its close, “We will follow the Protestant religion both we and our children; and in it we will live and die.” The priests and monks were furious, and sought the life of Farel. But the people, determined to have the matter lawfully settled, presented themselves before the governor and deputies of

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<sup>350</sup> *History of Protestantism*, vol. 2, p. 248.

Berne, to vote on the question, whether Romanism or Protestantism should be the religion of Neuchatel. A majority of eighteen votes gave the victory to the Reformation. No one was compelled to abandon popery but the Reformation was legally established.

Such was the character of Farel's work in the French-speaking parts of Switzerland, at the foot of the Jura, and on the shores of its lakes. But this was no easy work in those days. Everywhere he met with violent opposition from the Catholics; and the mob, instigated by the priests, frequently raised tumults. This was an excuse for sounding the tocsin and ringing the alarm-bells, causing the inhabitants to rush from their houses to the scene of uproar. On such occasions it fared hard with Farel, and with those who helped him in his work. At Vallengin he was seized, beaten, struck with stones, forced into a chapel and asked to kneel before the images of the saints. On his refusing he was again beaten with such violence, that the stains of his blood were long to be traced on the walls of the chapel. He was then thrown into a dungeon, but afterwards released through the intercession of his friends at Neuchatel. At St. Blaise he met with similar treatment. He was so disfigured with bruises as scarcely to be recognized by his friends; but after some care and nursing at Morat, he set out for Orbe to evangelize.

On the other hand, those who had embraced the new opinions, were often in too great haste to destroy the symbols of the old religion. This practice generally assumed the character of popular vengeance. Churches were entered, altars dismantled, images broken, pictures torn down, priceless statues, precious relics, all fell before the fury of the multitudes. But there was no Inquisition in that primitive country, no Familiars amongst the simple people who were occupied in feeding their cattle on the mountains, or in cultivating corn and the vine within their fertile valleys; and no Alva, with his ruthless Spaniards, to slay, burn, and ravage. Their tumults generally ended without bloodshed, the Reformed generally being the stronger party.<sup>351</sup>

### **FAREL REACHES GENEVA**

But Farel had **Geneva** before him; he was working his way to what he considered the centre of his operations. The Genevese had been contending for some time with the duke of Savoy, and their unprincipled bishop for political freedom. And in the struggle, Berthelier, Bonevard, and Levrier, names of famous memory, suffered as martyrs of liberty. Now they were to be drawn into a fresh contest, but for a higher and holier liberty.

Farel arrived in Geneva in the autumn of 1532, accompanied by Anthony Saunier, like himself a native of Dauphiny, and recommended by letters from the government of Berne. As Geneva becomes, from this time, the second centre in Reformed Christendom, we will favour the reader with an extract from the copious pen of the historian of Protestantism as to its situation and

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<sup>351</sup> D'Aubigné, vol. 3, p. 496. Scott, vol. 3, p. 70. Wylie, vol. 2, p. 247.

ecclesiastical condition. “There is no grander valley in Switzerland than the basin of the Rhone, whose collected floods, confined within shining shores, form the Lemman. As one looks towards sunrise, he sees on his right the majestic line of the white Alps; and on his left, the picturesque and verdant Jura. The vast space which these magnificent chains enclose is variously filled in. Its grandest feature is the lake. It is blue as the sky, and motionless as a mirror. Nestling on its shores, or dotting its remoter banks, is many a beautiful villa, many a picturesque town, almost drowned in the affluent foliage of gardens and rich vines... Above the forests of chestnuts and pine-trees soar the great peaks as finely robed as the plains, though after a different manner — not with flowers and verdure, but with glaciers and snows.

“But this fertile and lovely land, at the time we write of, was one of the strongholds of the papacy. Cathedrals, abbeys, rich convents, and famous shrines, which attracted yearly troops of pilgrims, were thickly planted throughout the valley of the Lemman. These were so many fortresses, by which Rome kept the country in subjection. In each of these fortresses was placed a numerous garrison. Priests and monks swarmed like the locust... In Geneva alone there were nine hundred priests. In the other towns and villages around the lake, and at the foot of the Jura, they were not less numerous in proportion. Cowls and shaven crowns, frocks and veils were seen everywhere. This generation of tonsured men and veiled women formed the *church*. And the dues they exacted of the lay population, and the processions, chants, exorcisms, and blows which they gave them in return, were styled *religion*.”<sup>352</sup>

Such was the moral and ecclesiastical condition of Geneva when Farel and Saunier entered it. And if we add to this account of its ecclesiastical swarms, that the population at that time numbered only about twelve thousand, we may well wonder how such a ravenous host could be sustained. But a still greater wonder is, how could an evangelist, almost single-handed, venture to assail such a host, and that on their own ground — the region of darkness and wickedness? Only through faith in the living God, we answer. Doubtless Farel was a great preacher, one of the greatest in the sixteenth century. Still he required faith in the presence of God, and in the power of His Holy Spirit through the word preached.

### **FAREL’S FIRST PREACHING IN GENEVA**

The subject of Farel’s first sermon was the Holy Scriptures; he maintained that they were the only source of divine knowledge, and the only authority on earth to which the conscience of man was subjected. He denounced the traditions of the Fathers and the decrees of Councils as having no authority over the conscience in the sight of God. His second subject was the full and free forgiveness of all sin, on the ground of the work of Christ on the cross.

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<sup>352</sup> Wylie, vol. 2, p. 256.

This pardon was free to the chief of sinners, through faith in Christ; papal pardons had to be bought with money or with penance. We can imagine the burning zeal of the preacher, placing the absolute truth of God in striking contrast with the mere superstitions of the papacy, and many through grace believing.

When the canons and priests gained information of his proceedings, they were in a state of great dismay. They had heard of his desolating work in the Pays de Vaud. He was instantly arrested and carried before the council. As usual on all such occasions, it was alleged that he was an enemy to the civil government, a trumpet of sedition. Farel replied: "That he was no instrument of sedition, but only a preacher of the truth; that he was prepared to lay down his life for the divine doctrine; that the patronage of Berne was a sufficient guarantee for his honesty; that he had a right to a public and impartial trial; and that this could not be refused him without offence to God, and to the gospel, and to the lords of Berne." This last consideration had weight with the council, as Geneva was in alliance with Berne; so Farel was dismissed with an admonition to refrain from further preaching.

But the clergy were not so easily satisfied as the town council. Farel and Saunier were summoned to appear before the episcopal tribunal, under the pretext of discussing the question in dispute. And then, indeed, William Farel at least might have perished from private violence, had not two magistrates accompanied them as deputies from the council. Some of the clergy had arms concealed under their sacerdotal robes. But Farel was undaunted, notwithstanding the unbridled fury of the clergy. He demanded that his doctrines should be heard, assailed, and defended in public disputation. This was, of course, refused. Farel, then, with great boldness defended his doctrine, concluding with these words: "I have no authority but that of God, whose messenger I am." "He hath spoken blasphemy," exclaimed one of the judges, "What further need have we of witnesses? he is guilty of death. Away with him! to the Rhone! to the Rhone! Better that the wicked Lutheran die, than live and trouble the people." "Speak the words of God," Farel quickly replied, "not the words of Caiaphas!" On which all the assembly cried aloud with one voice, "Kill the Lutheran, kill him!" They closed round the two evangelists, the priests were pulling out their arms, and both must have perished, but for the interposition of the two magistrates. They were ordered forthwith to leave the city.

But it was now too late. The Reform movement was really begun, God was working and the priests were impatient to arrest the progress of His grace. Nevertheless they were allowed to manifest the spirit of their leader. When the evangelists left the episcopal tribunal, they were with difficulty preserved from the fury of a mob of women, instigated by the priests, who would have consigned the preachers, without trial or mercy, "to the Rhone;" but as the Lord would have it, at the critical moment, a military band came up which rescued the Reformers, and escorted them to their lodgings.

It was now thought by the friends of Reform, that the preaching of Farel was too powerful and his name too formidable, to begin the work in Geneva, that he should retire for a time and that some unknown name should carry on the work, now manifestly begun, in a quieter way. Farel agreed, left the place, feeling he had done so little; but he had accomplished more than he at that moment knew. Meanwhile several other preachers had arrived, but we hear only of one **Froment**, or Fromentius, who turned schoolmaster, seeking to introduce his doctrines to the parents through the children and by means of classes, New Testaments, and books, which he distributed. Still the Lord was working, and a number of influential people were brought to the knowledge of the truth.

### **FAREL RETURNS TO GENEVA**

In the December of 1533 Farel re-entered the gates of Geneva, determined not again to leave it till the Reformation had been consummated there. **Peter Viret**, of Orbe, arrived about the same time. Thus there were three of the most powerful preachers of that period in Geneva — Farel, Viret and Froment. The internal struggle had been excited afresh by the Reformers observing the Lord's supper, according to its original institution. Some of the rich and honourable of Geneva had united with them, which caused great sensation. A fierce sedition was the consequence.

But the Catholics, still the stronger party, would listen to nothing but the complete suppression of the new movement. They assembled with the deliberate purpose of perpetrating a general massacre of the Reformers. "It is affirmed," says Waddington, "that they were conducted by no fewer than five hundred armed priests; and that they were fortified by a *carte blanche* from the bishop, expressing his approbation of every act that, under any circumstances, they might be led to perform against the enemies of the Catholic faith." A number of women, with their aprons filled with stones helped to swell the Roman Catholic host. The tumult was allayed, however, before much mischief was done. It happened that several merchants from Friburg were in Geneva at that moment, and seeing the Catholics brandishing swords and other weapons, they boldly interfered and prevented them from carrying out their purpose. Two days afterwards an edict of peace was issued by the Council of Sixty, which rather favoured liberty of conscience. Among other things they said, "It is forbidden to preach anything that cannot be proved from Holy Writ."

But these terms of pacification lasted but a short time. In less than six weeks the Catholics broke forth again into a still ruder commotion, attended by more serious consequences. Its instigator appears to have been Canon Werali, a man of great strength, and a great warrior. It is said that he could wield his battle-axe as he could fling about his breviary. He headed the tumult, clothed in complete armour, and brandishing a two-edged sword. After nightfall rumours of war were heard in the street, the tocsin was sounded, and

according to the habits of those times, most of the inhabitants rushed into the street armed; but the darkness made it difficult to distinguish between friend and foe. In the confusion, however, the great papal champion was slain, and the Catholics dispersed. Werali being a member of a noble and powerful family of the popish canton of Friburg, that state had now a plausible pretext for interfering in the troubles of Geneva by demanding the prosecution of the murderers of her citizen, and for a general intervention in favour of the established religion. Thus were the enemies of the Reformation greatly multiplied, and fresh troubles arose through the violence of the Duke of Savoy, and the treachery of the bishop.<sup>353</sup>

### **A PUBLIC DISPUTATION**

Many eyes, from all quarters, were now turned to the small town of Geneva. Clement VII and Charles V were anxiously watching the struggle; but God's purpose was to bless, and He overruled all these commotions for the accomplishment of His gracious object. After a great deal of menacing and remonstrance between Berne and Friburg, the grand question came to a public disputation.

On the 30th of May, 1535, the disputants met in the grand hall of the Convent de Rive. Caroli, a doctor of the Sorbonne, and Chapius, a Dominican of Geneva, appeared as the champions of the church, while one Bernard, a newly converted Franciscan, took the lead in defence of the Reformed doctrines, supported by Farel, Viret, and Froment. Eight members of council were appointed to preside, and four secretaries were to take down all that was said on both sides. The disputation lasted four weeks. Victory, as usual on such occasions, rested with the Reformers. Indeed, it was so complete that both Caroli and Chapius acknowledged themselves vanquished, and declared, in presence of the vast assembly their conversion to the Reformed faith. Multitudes professed their faith in the truth as brought forward by the Reformers and many ecclesiastics and monks followed the stream.

But Rome's resources were not yet exhausted; she had not given up hope. The anathemas of the pope, the armed priests the furious women, had all failed; but to uphold the Catholic faith a darker deed was yet to be perpetrated. It so happened at the three ministers, Farel, Viret, and Froment, lodged in the house of Bernard, which gave a favourable opportunity to cut off the three at once **by poison**. A woman was induced to leave Lyon, on pretence of religion, and come to Geneva She was received into the house of Bernard as a servant Shortly after she mixed her poison with the dinner prepared for the ministers. Happily, however, Froment dined elsewhere that day, and Farel, being indisposed, did not dine but Viret tasted the drugged dish, and was brought to the point of death. He recovered, but the effects of the poison remained with him till the end of his days. The wretched woman confessed the

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<sup>353</sup> For lengthy details, see D'Aubigné's *History of the Reformation in Europe*, vols. 1 and 2.

crime, but accused a canon and a priest of having bribed her to commit the offence. They denied the accusation by oath and were released, but the poor woman was executed.

The miscarriage of this and several other cruel plots of the Catholics opened the eyes of many, and tended greatly to hasten the downfall of the Romish superstition in Geneva. The feeling of the public was now in favour of Reform, but the council was disposed to check, rather than to encourage the popular zeal. At length, however, after the sense of the great majority of the citizens had been ascertained, the council of Two Hundred was assembled, and the celebration of the mass was officially suspended. This decree was followed by a general edict to the effect: "That the services of God were thenceforward to be performed according to the statutes of the gospel; and that all acts of papal idolatry were to cease altogether." Ever after that day the evangelical ministers preached with perfect freedom. The monasteries were next invaded; and there were some startling revelations of the frauds by which the people had been so long and so grossly deluded, and the vast superstition upheld.

### **HOW THE MONKS DECEIVED THE PEOPLE**

Many of these secret machinations and **impostures** are too vile to be transferred to our pages; but one, which is more amusing than revolting, we may quote. A number of strange lights, or small flames of fire, would sometimes be seen moving about the churchyard at night, to the utter amazement of the people. What could they be? was the question. "These," answered the priests gravely, "are souls from purgatory. They have come to excite on their behalf the compassion of their living relatives. Will fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, not freely give of their money for prayers and masses that we may not have to return to the place of torment? was their pitiful cry." The effect of this imposture was another golden harvest to the priests. But what were these livid lights and blue flames really? They were simply a number of crabs with little bits of candle stuck on their backs, the heat of which may have propelled their movements. The enlightened public, indignant at having been so long deceived, relieved the crabs of their fiery burdens, and threw them back into the cool waters of the lake.<sup>354</sup>

Thus far the triumph of the Reformation was confined to the city of Geneva. The next step was to extend it to the rural clergy. Ministers were commissioned to instruct them, and to preach the new doctrines to their congregations; and so effectual was this reasonable plan, that all the dependent villagers speedily adopted the creed of the metropolis.

### **THE REFORMATION ESTABLISHED AT LAUSANNE**

**Lausanne** and its territory are also to be included among the places in which the Reformation was now established. In popish times this was a city of great

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<sup>354</sup> Waddington, vol. 3, p. 275. Wylie. vol. 2, p. 273.

importance. It was the resort of pilgrims who flocked thither to pray before the image of Our Lady, and to purchase indulgences; a traffic which added greatly to the riches of the church. This city could boast, besides its bishop, a chapter of thirty-two canons, a convent of Dominicans, and another of Franciscans, and a numerous staff of priests; but, with all the provision thus made for its religious instruction and improvement, it was sunk even below the habitual ignorance, superstition, and vice of the times. Farel's first visit to Lausanne in 1529, was unsuccessful; but the current of ecclesiastical affairs had been running strongly since then in favour of Reform; and when Viret visited the place in the spring of 1536, the effect of his preaching was so great, that some images were broken by the popular indignation, amidst the clamour of priests and canons. After various negotiations between Berne and Lausanne, a public disputation was called for by the Reformers. It lasted eight successive days, and ended much the same as the one at Geneva had done. Thus the triumph of the Reformation was also complete in Lausanne.

The two chief results which generally followed these great religious changes, and which were especially pursued by the Swiss Reformers, were the purification of morality, and the advancement of education. Being much in the spirit of Old Testament saints, the most rigid laws were enacted against gambling, against blasphemous oaths, against farces, lewd songs, dances, masquerades, and against every form of intemperance. We find the enactment of such laws immediately following the triumphs of Reform in all important places. It was particularly so at Geneva. There, the citizens struck a new coin to commemorate the foundations of their Protestantism, and adopted a new civic motto —" After darkness, light."

### THE ARRIVAL OF CALVIN IN GENEVA

During the August of 1536, amongst the crowds of exiles who were daily arriving at the gates of Geneva, one presented himself, a Frenchman, a native of Picardy, young, being only in his twenty-eighth year, of slender figure, and pale face; he had come to rest for the night and depart on the morrow. This man was **John Calvin**. But though young, and of a modest bearing, he was not without celebrity, both as a scholar and a divine, nor untried as a friend of the Reformation. He was on his way from Rome, with the intention of fixing his permanent residence at Basle or Strasburg, but the war, which was then raging between France and the Empire compelled him to take a circuitous route by Geneva. But the energetic Farel thought that the author of the *Christian Institutes* was just the man for Geneva, and urged him to remain. The God of all goodness, he thought, had sent him at that critical moment.

Calvin replied that his education was yet incomplete; that he required still further instruction and application before he should be qualified for so difficult a position as the state of Geneva presented, and begged to be allowed to proceed to Basle or Strasburg. On this, Farel raised his voice as with the

authority of a direct messenger from God, and said, “But I declare to you on the part of God, that if you refuse to labour here along with us at the Lord’s work, His curse will be upon you; since, under the pretence of your studies, it is yourself that you are seeking, rather than Him.” Calvin had hitherto thought that his proper sphere was his library, and the main instrument of work his pen; but feeling overwhelmed by so authoritative a declaration of the will of God, proceeding from so illustrious an apostle of the Reformation, he did not dare to decline the yoke of the ministry evidently imposed on him by the Lord. He gave his hand to Farel, and his heart to the work of the Lord in Geneva. “He was immediately appointed professor of theology, and soon afterwards minister of one of the principal parishes. This double occupation afforded space enough for the display of his great qualities, and opened the path to that singular influence, which he afterwards acquired, both in church and state.”<sup>355</sup> Here he laboured for twenty-eight years — with the exception of a brief banishment — and became the great leader in the cause of Protestantism, and the most illustrious chief of the Reformation.

### THE EARLY HISTORY OF CALVIN

As the celebrated French Reformer is now established at Geneva, and will be henceforth the central figure in the great Reform movement, it will be interesting to the reader to know something of his early history. He was born at **Noyon** in Picardy, July 10th, 1509. His parents were of moderate fortune, but much respected by the people among whom they lived. His father, Gerard, was secretary to the bishop, and was so esteemed by the neighbouring gentry, that his son John received his early education with the children of a family of rank — the Momors.

At the age of fourteen Calvin went to Paris, and had there for his Latin tutor, in the college de la Marche, the celebrated Mathurin Cordier. One of his books is still well known in some of our schools as *Cordier’s Colloquies*. But he was more than an eminent teacher; he was a man of true piety. Having embraced the Reformed faith, he ultimately removed to Geneva, where he continued to labour as a teacher in the public college to the end of his days. He died in 1564, about six months after his distinguished pupil, at the advanced age of eighty-five.

Calvin, having fulfilled his course under Cordier, passed in 1526 to the college of Montaigu, a seminary for the training of priests. As it was the manner of those times for very young persons to hold even high ecclesiastical offices, his father solicited, and obtained for him at the age of twelve years, the chaplaincy of la Gesine, a small church in the neighbourhood. He had his crown shaven by the bishop, and although not yet admitted into priest’s orders, he became a member of the clergy.

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<sup>355</sup> Waddington, vol. 3, p. 278.

## CALVIN'S CONVERSION

It is with no small interest that we trace an intimate connection between the conversion of Calvin and the Sorbonne of Paris. Lefevre, as we have already seen, was the means of Farel's conversion. It now appears that another young man was listening to the lectures about the same time, and brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. This was Peter Robert Olivetan, born at Noyon, cousin to Calvin and a few years older. It was this same Olivetan who afterwards translated the Bible into French from Lefevre's version. When his cousin arrived in Paris, he made known to him the gospel he had embraced. The young Calvin at that time was a firm Romanist, and fortified himself against his cousin's arguments by the rigid observance of all the rites of his church.

"True religion," said Olivetan, "is not that mass of ceremonies and observances which the church imposes upon its followers, and which separates souls from Christ. O my dear cousin, leave off shouting with the papists, The fathers! The doctors! The church! and listen to the prophets and apostles. Study the scriptures." "I will have none of your new doctrines," answered Calvin, "their novelty offends me. I cannot listen to you. Do you imagine that I have been trained all my life in error? No! I will strenuously resist your attacks." Olivetan put the Bible into his hands, entreating him to study the word of God.

The Reformation at that time was agitating all the schools of learning. Masters and students occupied themselves with nothing else — some, no doubt, from mere curiosity, or to throw discredit upon the Reformers and their new doctrines but there was a general awakening of conscience, and a readiness to believe the true gospel of the grace of God. Happily for Calvin he was among the latter class. The Holy Scriptures, by the blessing of God, separated him from Roman Catholicism, as they had done his cousin Olivetan.

It is supposed that Calvin was under deep exercise of soul for more than three years — from 1523 to 1527. d'Aubigné who is the best authority on this point, says, "Yet Calvin whose mind was essentially one of observation, could not be present in the midst of the great movement going on in the world, without reflecting on truth, on error, and on himself. Oftentimes, when alone, and when the voices of men had ceased to be heard, a more powerful voice spoke to his soul, and his chamber became the theatre of struggles, as fierce as those in the cell at Erfurt. Through the same tempests, both these great Reformers reached the haven of rest." But the **conversion of Calvin** lacks the thrilling interest which all have found in the conversion of Luther, and chiefly from the absence of details. The letters which he wrote to his father at this time, and also those of Olivetan to his friends, have not been found. Theodore Beza, his most intimate friend, says, "Calvin having been taught the true religion by one of his relations named Peter Olivetan, and having carefully read the holy books, began to hold the teaching of the Roman church

in horror, and had the intention of renouncing its communion.” Here it is only the *intention* of leaving Rome; but his own words in after life are positive: “When I was the obstinate slave of the superstitions of popery,” he says, “and it seemed impossible to drag me out of the deep mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued me, and made my heart more obedient to His word.”

Thus we see the various spiritual links between the Sorbonne and the first and greatest Reformers. “Fare!, ” says d’Aubigné, “is the pioneer of the Reformation in France and Switzerland. He rushes into the wood, hews down the giants of the forest with his axe. Calvin came after, like Melancthon, from whom he differs indeed in character, but whom he resembles in his part as theologian and organizer. These two men built up, settled, and gave laws to the territory conquered by the first two Reformers.” And Beza speaks of Lefevre as the man who “boldly began the revival of the pure religion of Jesus Christ; and that from his lecture room issued many of the best men of the age and of the church.”<sup>356</sup>

### **CALVIN A STUDENT OF LAW**

The divine light which now filled the soul of Calvin, showed him the midnight darkness of the church of Rome. That which once possessed to his mind the most dazzling splendour, the weight of antiquity, and which he believed to be the habitation of God and the very gate of heaven, was now to his newly opened eyes the temple of idols and the very gate of perdition. This we gather from the fact that he could no longer minister at her altars, and he resigned his sacred office. Happily this was with the consent of his father; and he immediately turned his attention to the study of civil law at Orleans and at Bourges. But the lessons of the law, to which he had now to listen, must have ill-suited the taste of one who had just fled from the flames of martyrdom in Paris. “It is the magistrate’s duty,” said his teacher, “to punish offences against religion as well as crimes against the state.” “What!” he would exclaim, “shall we hang a thief who robs us of our purse, and not burn a heretic who robs us of heaven?” The effect of such a maxim on the minds of the people, when taught and amplified by the priests, would certainly destroy their sympathies, and lead them to approve of the death of heretics. Such was the teaching of Calvin and of Frenchmen at that time, and as it had an appearance of justice, and professed to be applied for the protection of the true religion, it took a firm hold of the superstitious mind, and may have left deeper traces on Calvin’s own mind than he was aware of.

### **CALVIN GIVES UP THE STUDY OF CIVIL LAW**

When at Bourges Calvin seems to have abandoned the study of the law, and turned again to the church as he now saw it in the holy scriptures. He applied himself to the study of the Greek language, and also to Hebrew and Syriac, in order to the better understanding of the Old Testament, for theology was still

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<sup>356</sup> D’Aubigné’s *Calvin*, vol. 1, chap. 7, 8. D’Aubigné’s *Luther*, vol. 3, p. 501.

the favorite object of his attention. He was also most willing to make known the truth to others in which he now believed and delighted. Listeners flocked around him, and the solitude he loved became impossible to him. "As for me," he says, "inasmuch as being naturally diffident and retiring, I have always preferred repose and tranquillity; I began to seek for some hiding-place, and means of withdrawing myself from the world, but, so far from obtaining my wish, every retreat and every secluded spot were to me so many public schools." But he was not of those who are silent on what they believe. He preached in the secret meetings at Bourges and at Paris. Theodore Beza says "He advanced wonderfully the cause of God in many families, teaching the truth not with an affected language, to which he was always opposed, but with a depth of knowledge and so much gravity of speech, that no man heard him without being filled with admiration."

Calvin once more ventured to **Paris**. He had fondly hoped that France might be the sphere, and Paris the centre of his work; but the violence of the persecution compelled him to conceal both himself and his intentions. He was now about twenty-four years of age, and full of zeal and activity. One of his friends, Nicholas Cop, son of a citizen of Basle, who was first physician to the king, and rector of the university of Paris, had to deliver an oration according to custom on All Saints' Day. What an opportunity, suggested Calvin to his friend Cop, of having the gospel preached in the most public of all the pulpits of Christendom! But, Cop feeling unequal to the task of composing such an address, it was agreed that Calvin should write and that Cop should read the oration. On the 1st of November, 1533, in the midst of the learned men of Paris, the rector delivered his address to a silent and surprised audience. Calvin had forgotten to say anything about the saints, though it was "All Saints' Day," but extolled the grace of God as man's only hope of pardon and salvation through the precious sacrifice of Christ.

When the assembly rose, the storm burst forth. It was denounced as treason against the saints, and a blow struck at the very foundations of Rome. But Cop was the king's first physician and a great favourite; what was to be done? He was denounced by the Sorbonne to the parliament, and to the executioner of heretics. Cop saw his danger in time, fled to Basle, and so escaped the flames of martyrdom. Cop was gone, but his friend Calvin was suspected of being the real author of the oration. The lieutenant-criminal, the notorious John Morin, had orders to apprehend him. While sitting safely, as he thought, in his obscurity, a fellow-student rushed into his chamber, begging him to flee that instant; the sergeants were at the outer gate. Dropping from the window by means of a sheet, he escaped; and under the name of Charles Heppeville, clothed in a peasant's dress, with a garden hoe on his shoulder, he reached Angouleme, and was received into the house of the Canon Louis du Tillet, where he stayed for some time, and had a rich library at his service.

## THE INSTITUTES PUBLISHED

Calvin was already occupied with his great work on the christian religion, and may have collected some of his materials from du Tillet's library. But being in peril of his life, he removed to Basle, the city of refuge for the French exiles at that time. Here he completed and published the most celebrated of all his writings, the **Institutes of the Christian Religion**. The work appeared in the month of August, 1535.

“This was the first theological and literary monument of the French Reformation,” says Felice. “Spreading abroad in the schools, the castles of the gentry, the houses of the burghers, even the workshops of the people, the *Institutes* became the most powerful of preachers. Round this book the Reformers arrayed themselves as round a standard. They found in it everything — doctrine, discipline, ecclesiastical organization; and the apologist of the masters became the legislator of their children.” In his dedicatory epistle to Francis I, he supplicated the king to examine the confession of faith of the Reformers, so that, beholding them to be in accordance with the Bible, he might treat them no longer as heretics. “It is your duty, sire,” he says to the king, “to close neither your understanding nor your heart against so just a defence, especially when the question is of such high import, namely, how the glory of God shall be maintained on earth... a matter worthy of your ears, worthy of your jurisdiction, worthy of your royal throne.” But there is too good reason to believe that the king never deigned to read the preface to the *Institutes*.

Calvin was now the acknowledged leader of the French Reformation. Luther was too distant; Farel was too ardent; but Calvin had the solid character and the lively sympathies suited to the French. He paid a visit about this time to the justly celebrated Renee of France, daughter of Louis XII, and duchess of Ferrara, one of the first provinces of Italy that received the Reformation. Like her cousin, Margaret of Valois, she had embraced the true gospel, and became the patroness of the persecuted Reformers in Italy, for which she afterwards suffered severe persecution though she was the daughter of a king. This visit established a friendship which was never interrupted: we find Calvin addressing a letter to her when on his death-bed.<sup>357</sup>

In 1536 Calvin was appointed pastor and professor at Geneva. The religious, moral, intellectual, and even political revolution he brought into that city with him, is beyond the limits of our “Short Papers.” His life and labours have been often written. We will notice that which enters into the plan of this history.

Calvin soon found that it was no easy post that he was called to occupy. The people were just emerging from a state of ignorance, superstition, and

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<sup>357</sup> Dr. McCrie gives many interesting details of this amiable and accomplished princess in his *History of the Reformation in Italy*.

immorality, in which the city had been sunk for ages; and the corruption of her “nine hundred” priests, had no doubt produced its own likeness in the manners of the citizens. But all laxity of morals, and all amusements which had that tendency, were sharply and sternly rebuked by Calvin and Farel both publicly and privately. They were not only the avowed enemies of the least vestige of popery, but they were strict disciplinarians. The majority of the people were not yet prepared for such self-denial. They had fought hard to cast off the yoke of Rome and the yoke of the Duke of Savoy, and they were determined to resist what they thought the hardest yoke of all — to give up all their pleasures and live according to a rigid ecclesiastical discipline. Even many of those who had outwardly embraced the Reformation doctrines were not in heart prepared for Calvin’s system. His idea was to treat the state as a theocracy and compel the citizens to conform to the law of God, under the threatened judgments of the Old Testament.

### **CALVIN AND FAREL BANISHED FROM GENEVA**

The Reformed ministers, as might have been expected, were soon involved in stormy contests with their congregations. They were evidently mistaken in seeking to bind a people, who had been accustomed to live according to their own pleasure, to so rigid a system, without sufficient moral training and preparation of heart by the grace of God. Immediately after his settlement at Geneva, Calvin drew up a “Formulary of Christian Doctrine and Discipline,” and set himself with the other ministers to induce the citizens at large, in their popular assembly, to abjure popery, and *swear* to observe the scheme of doctrine and order thus prepared for them. Many objecting to do this, troubles arose, party spirit began to run high; but as the ministers were unyielding, it resulted in their refusing to celebrate the Lord’s supper among the people; and the citizens, on their part, resolved to banish the ministers, and forbade them the use of their pulpits.

In the year 1538, the two banished ministers, with sad hearts, left the city on which they had bestowed much labour; but, as they have not informed us, we will not conjecture their feelings as they turned their backs upon Geneva. Farel went to Neufchatel, where he had formerly laboured, and where he remained till the end of his days. He there succeeded in establishing the system of discipline which was opposed in Geneva; and sought to serve the Lord and His church with all diligence till the year 1565, when he fell asleep in Jesus at the advanced age of seventy-six.

### **CALVIN AT STRASBURG — HIS WORK AND MARRIAGE**

Calvin proceeded to Basle and thence to **Strasburg**, to which he had been earnestly invited by the pastors of that city, Bucer and Capitol. He was immediately appointed a professor of divinity, and pastor of a congregation composed of French refugees. Nothing could speak more solemnly of the fierceness of the persecution which was at that time raging in France than the

fact that about *fifteen thousand* French exiles gathered around Calvin to hear the gospel in their native tongue. And if fifteen thousand were found in Strasburg alone, what numbers besides must have fled to England, Germany, and other places! Here Calvin laboured in preaching and writing for three years. The advanced state of society, a more polished congregation than the one he had left in Geneva, suited his taste, and was as balm to his wounded heart. He republished his *Institutes*, much enlarged, wrote his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, and a treatise on the Lord's supper.

So happy was the stern severe disciplinarian in Strasburg, that he consented to marry if his friends could find for him a suitable wife. The first lady that was named was of noble birth and richly cowered; but Calvin objected to marry one above his own degree, still, if the lady would consent to learn the French language, he would give his final answer; but this the lady refused to do, and that was the end of the first nomination. Another lady was proposed, and Calvin, in this case, made certain advances himself, but, happily, he discovered in time sufficient reasons for not going farther. At last, by the advice of his friend Bucer, he married Idolette de Bure, a widow of deep piety and christian courage. The reader will readily recall and contrast the impulsive, hasty, and unseasonable marriage of Luther, with the matrimonial negotiations of Calvin, so characteristic of the two great Reformers.<sup>358</sup>

### **CALVIN'S RETURN TO GENEVA**

But while Calvin was thus happily employed at Strasburg, everything was falling into great disorder, both political and religious on the banks of the Leman. The libertines, Anabaptists, and papists, now that the stern Reformers were gone, became riotous and ungovernable, while some of the magistrates, who had made themselves leaders in the violent proceeding against the ministers, came to a most tragic end. These troubles and these judgments, led the people to believe that they had sinned against God in banishing His faithful ministers, and to cry aloud for their return. The council of two hundred resolved in 1540, "in order that the honour and glory of God may be promoted, to seek all possible means to have Master Calvin back as preacher." And it was ordered in the general council, or assembly of the people, "to send to Strasburg to fetch Master Jean Calvinus, who is very learned, to be minister in this city."

Besides these assurances of a warm welcome, an honourable deputation was sent to him from the council to solicit his return. But the very thought of going back to Geneva greatly troubled him. He dreaded the coarse rough abuse which he had received from his rude opponents — especially the libertines. And was he again to leave his peaceful and happy situation in Strasburg, and plunge into that sea of troubles. Yet he wished to do the will of the Lord and to follow His guidance. Besides his official invitations, he had

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<sup>358</sup> *History of Protestantism*, vol. 2, p. 303.

letters from private christian friends urging him to return. One of them, pressing his return, assures him “that he will find the Genevese a new people — become such by the grace of God, and through the instrumentality of Viret.” The pastors of Zurich also pressed his return, urging the vast importance of the situation of Geneva, as situated on the confines of Germany, Italy, and France.

At length he consented to return, but in real subjection of heart to what he believed to be the will of his Lord and master. “There is no place under heaven,” he said, “that I more dread than Geneva, yet I would decline nothing that might be for the welfare of that church.” And writing to Farel, informing him of his decision, he says, “Since I remember that I am not my own, nor at my own disposal, I give myself up, tied bound, as a sacrifice to God.” His departure took place on the 13th of September, 1541. A mounted herald from Geneva rode before him, and the proceedings which accompanied his reception were highly honourable to all parties concerned.<sup>359</sup>

### CALVIN AND SERVETUS

The condemnation and death of **Michael Servetus**, the arch-heretic, at Geneva, have always been spoken of, both by Romish and Protestant writers, as a deep stain on the otherwise unsullied reputation of the great Reformer. But, in judging of Calvin’s connection with this melancholy affair we must bear in mind the mighty difference between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Many of the leading Reformers, both in Germany and Switzerland, believed it a duty to punish heresy with death. Yet notwithstanding these considerations, Calvin’s conduct in the matter must be utterly condemned by every enlightened Christian. And we are apt to wonder, in the nineteenth century, why such a student of scripture did not see the grace which shines throughout the New Testament. The Christian is saved by grace, stands in grace, and ought, surely, to be the witness of grace in an evil world. Besides, we have the example and teaching of our Lord, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” And in his sermon on the Mount, he thus teaches his disciples — “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust... Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect:” which simply means, Be ye perfect according to the perfect pattern of grace which is here shown by your heavenly Father.

But, strange to say, Calvin not only overlooked all such scriptures, but considered “Nebuchadnezzar as highly honoured in scripture for denouncing capital punishment against any who should blaspheme the God of Shadrach,

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<sup>359</sup> *Scott’s History*, vol. 3, p. 200. *D’Aubigné’s Calvin*, vol. 6, chaps. 15-17. *Wylie’s Protestantism*, vol. 2, chap. 14.

Meshach, and Abednego and doubts not that, had a pious and zealous christian magistrate been at hand, St. Paul would willingly have delivered over Hymenaeus and Alexander to him, to receive the chastisement they deserved.” But while charity is ready to grant that these were more the errors of the age than of the man, we must bear in mind, that unless we have Christ before us as our example and rule of life, we shall not be effectually delivered from such legal thoughts in any age. Moses and Elias must disappear, and Jesus be found alone. If we say that we abide in Him, we ought also to walk even as He walked.

### **THE CHARACTER AND EXECUTION OF SERVETUS**

Michael Servetus was a Spaniard, born in the same year with Calvin; of an active, vigorous mind; capable of applying himself to various pursuits; but, unfortunately, too speculative in divine things. He had studied medicine, law, and theology, in the latter, he was led away by a daring, self-confident spirit, into the wildest extravagances of pantheism, materialism, and a virulent opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity. But under all this heresy, like the Anabaptists — the celestial prophets — he was seditious and revolutionary. Such men generally aim at the overthrow of existing governments, as well as Christianity. This was the great sin, and the real cause of the persecution of the Anabaptists in those days. They followed the Reformers into every country, and sought to upset their work by affirming that they only went half way, and that Christians — like themselves — should rule the state as well as the church — that the time was come for the saints to take the kingdoms of this world.

Just before Servetus came to Geneva, he had escaped from the prison at Vienna, where he had been confined for the publication of an offensive and blasphemous work, and where he was afterwards burned in effigy, with five bales of his books. Calvin, who knew him well, and had exposed his heresies years before this affair at Vienna, is represented as saying, “If Servetus came to Geneva, and his influence could prevent it he should not go away alive.” Servetus did come, and Calvin informed the council of his arrival, and drew up the articles of indictment from his writings, which led to his condemnation and death. These charges he was required by the council to retract, deny, explain, or defend, as he should see good. For this preparation he was allowed all the time he demanded. But in place of conciliating enemies, or making friends by a spirit of sobriety and moderation when he made his defence he conducted himself in the most insolent manner. He gave to Calvin the lie direct over and over again, and called him by such names as “Simon the sorcerer.” Particulars of this case were sent to several other states for an opinion, and it was said, “With one consent they all pronounced that he has revived the impious errors with which Satan of old disturbed the church; and is a monster not to be endured.” With these concurring opinions, and the council of Geneva being unanimous, he was condemned to be led to Champel, and there burned alive.

The wretched man, up to the last, showed no signs of repentance, but the most dreadful fear of death. When Calvin heard the sentence, he was greatly affected, and interceded with the council, not that Servetus might be spared, but that his sentence might be mitigated; he prayed that the sword might be substituted for the fire — decapitation for burning. But this was refused; and on 27th of October, 1553, he was led to the summit of Champel, where the stake had been fixed. At the first glare of the flames, it is said, Servetus gave a shriek so terrible, that it made the crowd fall back and was heard at a great distance. His books were burned with him, but the fire burned slowly, and he lived half-an-hour at the stake.<sup>360</sup>

## CALVIN'S WORK

In the midst of the many conflicts in which Calvin was engaged, he was unwearied in his pastoral labours, and in his endeavours to expose and to counteract errors both in church and state, and to diffuse light and truth in all the churches. “Through the fame and the influence of this distinguished theologian, the Geneva church rapidly increased in numbers, and was looked upon as the centre of the Reformed cause. At his suggestion a college was established by the senate in 1558, in which he and Theodore Beza, along with others of great erudition and high talents, were the teachers. This seat of learning soon acquired so great fame that students resorted to it from England, Scotland, France, Italy, and Germany, in pursuit of sacred as well as secular learning.” By this means, the principles of the Reformation spread widely over the various countries of Europe. “To John Calvin the Protestant churches must ever owe a deep debt of gratitude, and, among Presbyterians in particular, his memory will be embalmed, as having given to their system of church polity the weight of his influence and name.” Along with this beautiful notice from “Faiths of the World,” we are bound to add a line from the very solid Mr. Fry, an episcopalian historian: “Geneva soon sunk in estimation with the church of England, because of the countenance she gave to the Presbyterian form of church government, and of the violent attack by some of her divines upon the ancient episcopal government, which was still retained with considerable splendour in England and in Ireland.” — Page 487.

The published works of Calvin are most voluminous. The Geneva edition amounted to twelve volumes, folio. The Amsterdam edition — said to be the best — by using larger paper, and printing closer, was reduced to nine volumes. A translation has also been published by the “**Calvin Society**,” in fifty-four volumes octavo. These contain his commentaries, expository lectures, miscellaneous pieces, the Institutes, and the author’s correspondence. The commentaries, no doubt, have formed the foundation on which the young divines of the Calvin school, from that day until now, have built up their

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<sup>360</sup> See the original records of the trial of Servetus before the “Little Council of Geneva,” discovered by M. Albert Rilliet, and published in 1844, with a short treatise on the subject, translated from the French, by Dr. Tweedie. The production of these records, though at this late hour, will go far to soften public opinion as to Calvin’s share in the death of Servetus.

studies, and in this respect, who can speak of the greatness or the effects of his work? But besides these works that have come down to us, we must bear in mind that a considerable amount of time is spent with such public men in seeing visitors from all parts of the world. Then there is the daily public ministration of the word, and public business of every kind. His advice or counsel by letter, for the help of other churches, is also expected. “When we think of his letters,” says one of his admirers, “written on the affairs of greatest weight, addressed to the first men of position and intellect in Europe; so numerous are they, that it might have been supposed he wrote letters and did nothing besides. When we turn to his commentaries, so voluminous, so solid, and so impregnated with the spirituality, and fire, and fragrance of the divine word, again, it would seem as if we had before us the labours of a lifetime.”<sup>361</sup>

### CALVIN AND CALVINISM

Whether we agree with the doctrinal teaching of Calvin, and the style in which he treated some of his subjects, we must give him full credit for zeal, devotedness, and industry. In a feeble and sickly body, and in a comparatively short lifetime he accomplished a great work. It is to be feared, however, that some of his extreme statements, and his harsh language as to “**reprobation,**” and “the reprobate,” unsanctioned, we believe, by scripture, have done much harm to many precious souls. “But the fact, I believe is,” says Scott, “that there was a coldness and hardness about Calvin’s mind, which led him sometimes to regard as objects of mere intellect those things which could not but deeply move the feelings of minds differently constituted; and hence, I cannot but concur, he did not duly appreciate the effect of the language he was using upon other persons. And to these extreme statements and this obnoxious language, I must think, is to be traced a considerable portion of that storm of obloquy and odium which has not ceased to beat upon the head of Calvin and Calvinism to this day.”<sup>362</sup>

### THE CLOSING DAYS OF CALVIN

But, though we may not be able to follow the learned theologian in his vast researches, or to receive the doctrines which he taught, we shall feel that he is of one heart and one mind with us, as we gather around his **death-bed**. His old and faithful friend, Farel, hearing of the serious illness of Calvin, wrote to say he must come and see him. He was then seventy-five, and in feeble health. Calvin wishing to save him the fatiguing journey, immediately dictated the following brief and affectionate reply: “Farewell, my best and most faithful brother; and, since it is God’s pleasure that you should survive me in this world, live in the constant remembrance of our union, which, in so far as it was useful to the church of God, will still bear for us abiding fruit in heaven. Do not expose yourself to fatigue for my sake. I respire with

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<sup>361</sup> *History of Protestantism*, vol. 2, p. 346.

<sup>362</sup> Vol. 3, chap. 26.

difficulty, and continually expect my breath to fail me; but it is enough for me that I live and die in Christ, who to His people in life and death is *gain*. Once more, farewell to thee, and to all the brethren, thy colleagues. — Geneva, May 2nd, 1564.”

The good old man, however, a few days afterwards, came to Geneva, and spent a little time with his friend in his sick-chamber; but history has not recorded what passed between them. Unlike Luther, who was always surrounded with admiring friends, who immediately chronicled all he said or did, and thereby gave a dramatic character to every incident of his life; we know nothing of the homely, familiar social life of Calvin, which greatly detracts from the interest of one who is made a central figure.

Having seen the members of the senate, and the ministers under the jurisdiction of Geneva, and having faithfully and affectionately addressed them, he felt that his work was done. The remainder of his days he passed in almost perpetual prayer. As he was repeating the words of the apostle, “The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be...” without being able to finish, he breathed his last, May 27th, 1564.

“He lived,” says Beza, “fifty-four years, ten months, and seventeen days; half of which time he passed in the sacred ministry. His stature was of a middle size, his complexion dark and pale, his eyes brilliant even unto death, expressing the acuteness of his understanding. He lived nearly without sleep. His power of memory was almost incredible; and his judgment so sound, that his decisions often seemed oracular. In his words he was sparing, and he despised an artificial eloquence; yet was he an accomplished writer, and, by the accuracy of his mind, and his practice in dictating to an amanuensis, he attained to speak little differently from what he would have written... Having given with good faith the history of his life and of his death, after sixteen years' observation of him, I feel myself warranted to declare that in him was proposed to all men an illustrious example of the life and death of a Christian, so that it will be found as difficult to emulate as it is easy to calumniate him.”<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Beza's narrative, quoted by Scott, vol. 3, p. 485.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 50

### THE REFORMATION IN FRANCE

The history of the Reformation in France awakens, as we approach it, the most mingled feelings. The wonderful progress of the truth in that gay, frivolous, and dissolute kingdom, creates the deepest interest, gratitude, and admiration, while the enemies' opposition and triumph fill the heart with deepest sorrow. It was then a great nation, and early blessed with the doctrines of the Reformation. Four years before the voice of Luther or Zwingli was heard, the university of Paris had been convulsed by the proclamation of a free salvation to the chief of sinners, through faith in Christ without works of human merit. The **doctrine of the Reformation** was not, therefore, imported from Germany or Switzerland, but was the native fruit of French soil. We cannot but lament that a kingdom so great, so central, so intelligent, did not throw off the papal yoke like England, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, and the half of Germany. But dearly she has had to pay in her periodical revolutions for the rejection of the light. The two elements, the gospel of the grace of God, and the superstitions of Rome, strove mightily with each other, and produced the most violent struggles and the most tragic scenes that history has recorded.

The awakening of souls by divine grace, to the importance of the truth, evidently commenced, as we have already seen, by means of James Lefevre, then nearly seventy years of age, and his youthful convert, William Farel. Then came Olivetan; and he, in his turn, was the means of leading Calvin to the knowledge of Jesus. In the commentary published by Lefevre, as early as 1512, he says, "It is God who gives us, by faith, that righteousness, which by grace alone justifies to eternal life." These few words — as in the case of Luther when he discovered the great truth — "The just shall live by faith" — show us plainly that the doctor of the Sorbonne, as well as the monk of Erfurt, was taught of God, that divine light had filled his own soul, and that this heavenly ray was sufficient to illumine the souls of others. And thus we find it. While Lefevre was sowing the seed of eternal life in his lecture room, Farel, now fully emancipated from the superstitions of Rome, and well instructed in the gospel of Christ, was preaching outside with great boldness. "Young and resolute," says Felice, "he caused the public places to resound with his voice of thunder;" and being now master of arts, he had the privilege of lecturing in the celebrated college of the cardinal Lemoine, one of the four principal colleges of the theological faculty in Paris, equal in rank to the Sorbonne. Other young evangelists were also engaged in preaching the gospel and circulating the truth.

The priests and the doctors of the Sorbonne became greatly alarmed for the interests of holy mother church; and the university issued a formal declaration condemnatory of the new opinions. But before going farther in the order of events, it may be well to notice the entrance upon the scene of **three persons**, on whose will the destinies of France henceforth depended; namely, Francis I, Margaret, his sister, and their mother, Louisa of Savoy, countess of Angouleme.

The good king Louis XII, styled the father of his people, died on the 1st of January, 1515. No sovereign of France had before been so honoured and loved; his death struck consternation into all hearts. When his funeral passed along the streets to the cathedral of Notre Dame, the public criers headed the procession, ringing their bells, and proclaiming in a voice almost inaudible through tears, “Le bon roi Louis, père du peuple, est mort” — “the good king Louis, the Father of his people, is dead.” Judging from circumstances, had the Reformation taken place during his reign, the whole of France might have become protestant; but his successor was a prince of a widely different character.

On the 25th of January, 1515, **Francis of Angouleme**, duke of Valois and cousin to the king, was crowned at Rheims with great display. He was of tall stature, handsome in person, possessed of every accomplishment as a cavalier and a soldier, but of dissolute character, and following rashly wherever his passions led him. His education, however, under de Boisy, his tutor, had not been neglected, so that he was considered the most learned prince in France, and greatly honoured literature and learned men. His queen, Claude, is little spoken of, but his sister Margaret, afterwards queen of Navarre, always occupies a prominent place. She was his senior by two years, had great influence over her brother, and being early converted, and amongst the first to embrace the Reformed doctrines, she often sheltered the persecuted, and succeeded in moving the king’s heart to clemency. But state policy, his pretended zeal for the church, and the influence of the parliament and the Sorbonne, frequently proved stronger than his sister’s love. Like her brother, she was tall, extremely beautiful, fascinating in her manners, and possessed of a great mind and ability, both natural and acquired. But after her conversion, all her powers, due allowance being made for the times and her position, were consecrated to the Lord and His people.

In the history of these remarkable persons, we have an instructive and an important illustration of the effect of grace and truth on the heart and in the life. They were the only children of Louisa, who was only twenty years old when she became a widow. Her daughter Margaret had not attained her fourth year; while the infant Francis had just completed his fifteenth month. Brave of heart, highly gifted and strong in the consciousness of duty, Louisa applied herself in every possible way to the responsibilities of her position. Her two cherished children became the objects of her affection and of her unceasing care, for which she was fully repaid in after life by the devotion of her

children; though, morally, they pursued such widely different paths. But we must now return to the more direct line of our history.

### **FIRST-FRUITS OF THE REFORMATION**

Meaux was the first city in France that heard the doctrines of the Reformation publicly expounded, and where the firstfruits of the gospel were gathered. About twenty-five miles east of Paris, and not far distant from the then Flemish frontier; it was a place full of working people — mechanics, wool-carders, fullers, cloth-makers, and artisans. The bishop of the place, **William Brissonnet**, a man of high rank, being count of Montbrun, became a convert to the new doctrines. Being a man of noble family, and of imposing address, he had been twice sent ambassador of Francis I to the Holy See; but he returned to Paris less a son of the church than he had been before going. He may, like Luther, have had his eyes opened to the dazzling wickedness of Rome, and to the utter hollowness of her gorgeous ceremonies.

On his return from his diplomatic missions, he was astonished to find the interest which had been awakened, and the change which had been wrought by the preaching of the new doctrines. The universities were full of debate and tumult on the subject, and the hearts of the artisans in his own diocese were greatly moved by the tidings of the gospel which had reached them. This was in 1521, four years after Luther had affixed his thesis to the door of his cathedral, and the very year in which he appeared before the Diet of Worms. The proximity of Meaux to Flanders, and the similarity of its trade to that of the larger Flemish towns occasioned a degree of intercourse between them, which doubtless contributed to the spread of the new opinions.

The bishop, evidently a pious, humble, but timid man, sought an interview with Lefevre, that he might be better instructed in the new doctrines. The aged doctor placed the Bible in the prelate's hands, assuring him that it was the Bible, and the Bible only, which ever leads the soul back to the truth as it was in the beginning of the gospel of Christ. Before there were schools, sects, ceremonies, or traditions, the truth was the means, and the Holy Spirit the power, of salvation. He searched the scriptures with great diligence; and, with the Lord's blessing, they became a source of great happiness to him. Writing to Margaret, over whom he exercised a wholesome influence, he says, "The savour of divine food is so sweet, that it renders the mind insatiable; the more one tastes, the more one desires it. What vessel is able to receive the exceeding fulness of this inexhaustible sweetness?"<sup>364</sup>

### **THE CONVERSION OF MARGARET**

Many of the eminent men who composed the court of Francis at this time, and who enjoy the confidence of the king, were favourably disposed towards the

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<sup>364</sup> Freer's *History of Margaret*, vol. 1, p. 98; d'Aubigné, vol. 3, 509; Smiles' *History of the Huguenots*, p. 18.

doctrines of Lefevre and the bishop. They were literary men whom Francis and Margaret had already encouraged and protected from the attacks of the Sorbonne, which regarded the study of Hebrew and Greek as the most pernicious of heresies. Francis, who loved learning, invited into his states learned men, thinking says Erasmus, “in this manner to adorn and illustrate his age in a more magnificent manner than he could have done by trophies, pyramids, or by the most pompous structures.” For a time he was carried away by the influence of his sister, by Brissonnet, and the learned men of his court. He would often be present at the conversations of the learned, listening with delight to their discussions. It was then that he prepared the way for the word of God by founding Hebrew and Greek Professorships.

But there is one thing to be borne in mind respecting the favour shown by many learned men to the idea of Reform, at that time. They, no doubt, felt the power and the truth of the doctrines set forth by the Reformers, but were not prepared to separate from the communion of the church of Rome. They felt and owned the need of Reform, and hoped that Rome and her priesthood would take the lead in the needed Reformation, and in this way have their hopes realized. But there was one in that brilliant circle whose convictions were deeper; whose conscience was at work, and who was diligently reading the New Testament in the Greek tongue. Such was the gifted **Margaret of Angouleme**. But she was unhappy; she was sad at heart amidst the gaities of the court. Francis was passionately fond of his sister whom he always called his “darling,” and Margaret was not less devoted in affection to her brother. They had grown up together, wandered in the fields and gardens together as children, and for a time their lives and tastes were one. But the time was come when they must be parted — parted morally at least.

The time, too, when this moral divergence took place, made it the more trying. Her grace and beauty made her the ornament of her brother’s court, and he wished her to be always at his side. “Francis,” says Wylie, “after wavering some time between the gospel and Rome, between the pleasures of the world and the joys that are eternal, made at last his choice, but, alas! on the opposite side to that of his lovely and accomplished sister. Casting in his lot with Rome, and staking crown and kingdom and salvation upon the issue, he gave battle to the Reformation.” The mother alas! followed her son in all the intrigues and dissimulation of state policy. She exercised the most unbounded influence over the king, and some of the calamities of France are attributed to her unjustifiable policy. He constituted her regent of France, during his absence on his Italian campaign, to the great mortification of his parliament.

Margaret, through divine grace, was led, chiefly by means of Brissonnet, to clearer and fuller views of the gospel, and to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. This took place about the year 1521, just as the persecution was beginning to burst forth, and many of the persecuted found within her gates a

shelter which a merciful providence had provided against the evil days that were at hand.

The influence of Margaret's conversion was felt among the high personages of the court, and the literary circles of the capital. The surprise was great, and all talked of the king's sister embracing the new opinions. Those who sought to arrest the work of the Lord sought the ruin of Margaret. She was denounced to the king, but he pretended to think it was untrue. Meanwhile, says Brantome, "she was very kind, mild, gracious, charitable, affable, a great almsgiver, despising nobody, and winning all hearts by her excellent qualities." The heart loves to dwell on such an instance of the rich sovereign grace of God, in the midst of the corruption and frivolities of the court of Francis. But God would have His witnesses and light-bearers even in the palace in the morning of the Reformation. The dear young Christian, however, was severely tried. Her struggles between conscience and what was expected of her were great and frequent. "The timid heart of the princess," says d'Aubigné, "trembled before the anger of the king. She was constantly wavering between her brother and her Saviour, and could not resolve to sacrifice either... However, such as she is, she is a pleasing character on the page of history. Neither Germany nor England present her parallel." Her light, we have no doubt, was often clouded and her testimony silenced by the angry looks of the king, as he manifested his hatred of the Reformation, and of the friends whom Margaret loved. But the Lord was with her though her feminine character may have sometimes drawn her into the shade.

### **THE REFORMATION OF BRISSONNET**

The courtly bishop was a constant and welcome guest at the palace. It was there he put the Bible into the hands of Margaret, and the friendship he enjoyed with Francis gave him many opportunities of spreading the new doctrines among the philosophers and scholars whom that monarch loved to assemble around him. And being a bishop, and in such favour at court, he had many listeners, and it may be to this period, and to such conversions as Brissonnet and Margaret, that we should trace the inclination of so many French nobles to embrace Protestantism. But the king and a large majority of the people remained faithful to Rome, and many of the nobility, intimidated by her threatenings and martyrdoms, hesitated, drew back, until at length their convictions waned in their minds, and left them captives to the darkness from which they lacked the moral courage to extricate themselves.<sup>365</sup>

**Brissonnet**, now full of zeal for the Reformation of the church, determined to set the example by reforming his own diocese. On his return from Paris to Meaux, he inquired into the lives and doctrines of the preachers, and discovered that nearly all the pulpits were filled with Franciscan monks, while the deans the incumbents, vicars, and curates, spent their time in idleness and

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<sup>365</sup> Freer's *History of Margaret*, vol. 1, p. 97.

their revenues in Paris. He ascertained that throughout his diocese there were scarcely ten resident priests, and out of one hundred and twenty-seven curates, there were only fourteen whom the bishop could approve of, or permit to officiate in his diocese. Then the bishop, turning towards men, who did not belong to his clergy, called around him, not only his old friend Lefevre, but Farel, D'Arvande, Roussel, and Francis Vatable. Thus the light of the gospel was gradually withdrawn from Paris where God in His sovereign grace had kindled its earliest sparks; and thither the persecutors were determined to follow, but as yet the tempest is forbidden to burst. The Reformers must be protected by the hand of a divine providence until their work is more complete.<sup>366</sup>

### THE BIBLE IN FRENCH AT MEAUX

Like our English Wycliffe, the aged Lefevre greatly desired that every man in France should have the privilege of reading the holy scriptures in his mother tongue. For this he laboured, and with the assistance of Brissonnet the four Gospels in French were published in October, 1522, the remaining books of the New Testament soon followed, and in October, 1524, a complete edition of the New Testament was published at Meaux. There the great fountain of light was first introduced which placed the work on a solid basis, and there the first Protestant congregation publicly assembled.

The pious bishop greatly furthered this good work by his wealth and his zeal. The word of God was speedily and widely circulated, the poor were supplied gratis. Never did a prelate devote his income to nobler purposes, and never did a seed time promise to bear a more glorious harvest. The preachers transferred from Paris to **Meaux**, and finding themselves unfettered, were acting with great liberty, while the word of God was diligently read in the homes and workshops of the people. The effect was sudden and great. Divine light had taken the place of papal darkness. The new book became the theme of their constant conversation, for while they handled their spindles and their combs, they could talk to each other of some fresh discovery they had made in the Gospels or the Epistles, and so the villagers in the vineyards, when the meal-hours came, one read aloud while the others gathered round him. "There was engendered in many," says a chronicler of that day, "an ardent desire for knowing the way of salvation, so that artisans, fullers, and wool-combers took no other recreation, as they worked with their hands, than to talk with each other of the word of God, and to comfort themselves with the same. Sundays and holidays especially were devoted to the reading of scripture, and inquiring into the good pleasure of the Lord."

The following quotation from a Catholic historian, though hostile, bears witness to the positive influence of the word of God on the people. "Lefevre, aided by the renown of his great learning contrived so to cajole and

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<sup>366</sup> D'Aubigné, vol. 3, p. 532; Freer, vol. 1, p. 98.

circumvent Messire Brissonnet with his plausible talk, that he caused him to tum aside grievously, so that it has been impossible to this day to free the city and diocese of Meaux from that pestilent doctrine, where it has so marvellously increased. The misleading that good bishop was a great injury, as until then he had been so devoted to God and to the Virgin Mary.”<sup>367</sup>

### **THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF THE WORD OF GOD**

These simple people soon became better instructed than their former teachers, the Franciscan monks. Christianity had taken the place of superstition, and the word of God had revealed Christ to their souls as the sun and centre of divine light. They now saw that praying to the saints is idolatry; that Christ is the only Mediator between God and man, and that the throne of grace is open to all. Meaux had thus become a focus of light; tidings of the great work spread through France, so that it became a proverb with reference to anyone noted for the new opinions that “he had drunk at the well of Meaux.”

The preaching of the new ministers was for a time confined to private assemblies, but as the number of their hearers increased, they gained courage and ascended the public pulpits. The bishop preached in his turn; he entreated his flock to lend no ear to those who would tum them aside from the word of God; even if an angel from heaven were to preach another gospel, be sure you do not listen to him. Lefevre, energetically expounding the word on one occasion, exclaimed, “Kings, princes, nobles, peoples, all nations should think and aspire after Christ alone!... Come near, ye pontiffs, come ye kings, come ye generous hearts!... Nations awake to the light of the gospel, and inhale the heavenly life. The word of God is all-sufficient!” And this, henceforth became the motto of that school: **THE WORD OF GOD IS ALL-SUFFICIENT.**

Thus the ray of light which we have seen shining through the darkness of prejudice about the year 1512, when Lefevre proclaimed from the tribune of the popish Sorbonne the futility of works without faith, declared the one Mediator between God and man; and boldly denounced the idolatry of those who invoked, and offered prayers to the Virgin and the saints. That divine ray was not suffered to become extinct. Four nearly twelve years it has been expanding until, like a beacon in the surrounding gloom, it is showing thousands and tens of thousands the way of life and peace, and how to avoid the ways of death and hell.<sup>368</sup>

### **COMMENCEMENT OF PERSECUTION IN FRANCE**

We must now look at the other side of the picture. If the young flock of Meaux was peacefully feeding on the green pastures under the bishop’s care, the monks, who cared little for the green pastures of the gospel, were losing their influence and their revenues, and the begging friars were returning

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<sup>367</sup> Quoted by d’Aubigné, vol. 3, p. 544.

<sup>368</sup> Freer, vol. 1, p. 70.

home from their rounds with empty wallets. “These new teachers are heretics,” said they; “and they attack the holiest of observances, and deny the most sacred mysteries.” Then, growing bolder, the most incensed among them proceeded to the palace. On being admitted they said to the prelate, “Crush this heresy, or else the pestilence, which is already desolating the city of Meaux, will spread over the whole kingdom.” Brissonnet was moved, and for a moment disturbed by the audacious monks, but did not give way. Yet admirable as were the piety and zeal of the bishop, he was of a timid and temporizing nature when danger assailed him. He lacked the firmness and constancy of spirit which enables some men, in days of persecution, to yield life rather than conscience and truth; and so he fell, yielding truth and conscience, and saving his life and liberty.

The monks, enraged at their unfavourable reception by the bishop, determined to lay their complaints before a higher tribunal. They hastened to Paris, and denounced the bishop before the Sorbonne and the parliament. “The city of Meaux,” said they, “and all the neighbourhood, are infected with heresy, and its polluted waters flow from the episcopal palace.” Thus was the cry of heresy raised, and France soon heard the cry raised of persecution against the gospel. The notorious Syndic, **Noel Beda**, eagerly listened. War was his native element. Shortly before the accession of Francis to the throne, he had been elected the head of the Sorbonne; so that he felt bound to wage war against any assertion or dogma at variance with the philosophy of the schools, or the articles of the Romish faith. “He eagerly dissected the writings of the Reformers,” says Miss Freer, “to drag forth their errors, and exhibit them in triumph to the hostile Sorbonnists. His fiery oratory raged against the study of the Greek and Hebrew languages; and Paris and the university rang again with the angry protests of the irascible Syndic. His expressions of fanatic joy at the prospect of the war he was about to wage, caused a thrill of horror to pervade the university. No one dare pronounce himself, when the cruel scrutiny of Beda might detect heresy, where none but himself even dreamed that it existed.” Such was the man that the timid Brissonnet had to face, along with others of a like spirit. “In a single Beda,” Erasmus used to say, “there are three thousand monks.”

The defeat of Pavia, where the flower of the French nobility fell, and where the knightly monarch was made the prisoner of Charles V, and carried to Madrid, made Louisa, the king’s mother, Regent of France.<sup>369</sup> This augured badly for the Reformers; for she inherited the Savoy enmity to the gospel, and had become the leader of a licentious gallantry, which not only polluted the court of her son, but proved a great hindrance to the spread of the pure gospel.

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<sup>369</sup> For a brief but graphic description of this memorable engagement, which Wylie truly calls the “Flodden of France,” see Freer’s *History of Margaret*, vol. 1, p. 153.

## BRISSONNET ACCUSED OF HERESY

As regent, she proposed the following question to the Sorbonne: “By what means can the damnable doctrines of Luther be chased and extirpated from this most christian kingdom?” The answer was brief, but emphatic — **“By the stake.”** And it was added, that if the remedy was not soon put in force, there would result great damage to the honour of the king, and of Madame Louisa of Savoy. Thus it was, according to a usual hollow pretence to uphold the throne, maintain the laws and order, that the authorities were compelled to unsheath the sword of persecution. The parliament was convoked. Brissonnet was summoned to appear. Beda and the monks of Meaux carried on the prosecution against the bishop and his friends, the Reformers, with unflagging vindictiveness. He was accused of holding Lutheran doctrines. The French edition of the New Testament, the joint labour of Brissonnet and Lefevre, was vehemently denounced; especially Lefevre’s preface, addressed “to all christian readers.” Beda had extracted from this address, and other works published at Meaux, forty-eight propositions which were declared by the faculty of theology to be heretical.

Brissonnet now saw what was before him; he must abandon the new doctrines, or go to prison, perhaps to the stake. He had not the courage necessary for resistance. Naturally timid, the menaces of Beda terrified him. Besides, he was persuaded by his friends to concede as much as would satisfy Rome, and then carry on the work of the Reformation in a less open way. He had also the powerful protection of Margaret to count upon, who was at this moment at St. Germain. But alas! he was not prepared to bear the scorn of the world, leave the church of Rome, and give up his riches and his station for the truth’s sake. At last the power of present things prevailed, and he yielded to the terms of the Sorbonne. He accordingly issued, in October, 1523, his episcopal mandates. 1. To restore public prayers to the Virgin and the saints. 2. To forbid anyone to buy, borrow, read, possess, or carry about with him, Luther’s works. 3. Not only to interdict the pulpits to Lefevre, Farel, and their companions, but to expel them from the diocese of Meaux. In addition to these stipulations, he had to pay a fine of two hundred livres.

What a blow this first fall of their kind and munificent friend must have been to both ministers and people! The flocks scattered, and the shepherds with heavy hearts turning their backs upon Meaux. Lefevre found his way to **Nerac**, where he terminated his career, under the protection of Margaret, at the advanced age of ninety-two. Farel escaped to Switzerland, where we have seen him happily engaged in the Lord’s work. Gerard Roussel contributed to the progress of the Reformation in the kingdom of Navarre. The members of the church were, by persecution, dispersed throughout France; the rest of the flock, too poor to flee, had to abide the brunt of the tempest.<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Wylie’s *Protestantism*, vol. 2, p. 141. d’Aubigné, vol. 3, chap. 7. Freer’s *History of Margaret*, vol. 1, p. 134. Fry’s *History*, p. 356.

## THE FIRST MARTYRS OF FRANCE

Brissonnet fallen, Lefevre and his friends compelled to flee, the Reformed church at Meaux dispersed, the monks again in the pulpits; this was a beginning of victory! But Rome was not satisfied, and never was, without the blood of the saints. "The sacerdotal and the civil power, the Sorbonne and the parliament, had grasped their arms — arms that were soon to be stained with blood. They set to work again; and blood, since it must be so, was ere long to gratify the fanaticism of Rome." The Christians at Meaux, though left without a shepherd, continued to meet in some private place for the reading of the word and prayer. One of their number, **John Leclerc**, a wool-comber, was so well instructed in the word, that he was soon regarded as one whom the Lord had raised up to strengthen and encourage them. True, he had neither received a college education, nor the imposition of hands, but he had the credentials of heaven, and took the oversight of the flock which the learned bishop had deserted.

Leclerc began well. He visited from house to house instructing and confirming the disciples; but his spirit was stirred within him, as he witnessed the monks so jubilant over their victory. Could he have overthrown the whole edifice of popery, and filled France with the truth of the gospel, the desire of his heart would have been answered. But like many others of a similar spirit in those times, his zeal carried him beyond the limits of prudence. He wrote a proclamation, styling the pope the Antichrist, predicting the downfall of his kingdom, and that the Lord was about to destroy it by the breath of His mouth. He then boldly posted his "placards" on the gates of the cathedral. Presently, all was in confusion. Priests, monks, and citizens gathered before the placards. Leclerc was suspected, seized, and thrown into prison. His trial was finished in a few days. The wool-comber was condemned to be whipped three days successively through the city, and branded on the forehead. He was led through the streets with his hands tied, and his neck bare, and the executioners willingly fulfilling their office. A great crowd followed, the papists yelled with rage; his friends showed him every mark of their tender compassion. When the brand of infamy was imprinted on his forehead with a hot iron, one woman drew near the martyr, with his bleeding back and burning brow, and sought to encourage him — she was his mother. Faith and maternal love struggled in her heart. At length, faith triumphed, and she exclaimed with a loud voice, "Glory to Jesus Christ and His witnesses." The crowd, so thrilled with her emotional voice, made way for her to return home unmolested, while her son was banished from Meaux.

Leclerc found his way to Metz, where the Reformation had made some progress. Though with the brand of heretic on his brow, his zeal was unabated, his courage unabashed, and his prudence as greatly at fault. One of the great festivals of the place was approaching. A little way outside the gates of the city stood a chapel, containing images of the Virgin, and of the most celebrated saints of the province, and whither all the inhabitants of Metz were

in the habit of making a pilgrimage on a certain day in the year, to worship these gods of stone, and to obtain the pardon of their sins. The pious and courageous soul of Leclerc was violently agitated. Tomorrow, he thought, the whole city, that should worship the one living and only true God, will be bowing down before these blocks of wood and stone. Without consulting the leading brethren there, he stole out of the city before the gates were closed, and sat down before the images in great conflict of mind. The passage in Exodus 23, "Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images," he believed, was now brought home to his conscience by the Spirit of the Lord, and, as Beza says "impelled by a divine afflatus," he broke down the images and indignantly scattered their fragments before the altar. At daybreak he re-entered Metz.

In a few hours, all were in motion in the ancient city of Metz. Bells were ringing, the population assembling, banners flying, and all, headed by canons, priests, and monks, moved on amidst burning tapers and smoking incense, to the chapel of Our Lady. But, suddenly, all the instruments of music were silent, and the whole multitude filled with indescribable agitation, as they saw the heads, arms, and legs of their deities strewn over the area where they had expected to worship them.

### **THE MARTYRDOM OF LECLERC**

The branded heretic was suspected. Death, death to the impious wretch was the cry, and all returned in haste and disorder to Metz. Leclerc was seized. He admitted his crime, and prayed the deluded people to worship God only. When led before his judges, he boldly confessed his faith in Christ, God manifest in the flesh, and declared that He alone should be adored. He was sentenced to be burnt alive, and immediately dragged to the place of execution. His persecutors contrived to render his **punishment most fearful** and appalling. He beheld the terrible preparation of his torture, but he was calm, firm, and unmoved as he heard the wild yells of monks and the people; and through the marvellous grace and power of God, no sign of weakness marred the glory of his sacrifice. They began by cutting off his right hand; then tearing his flesh with red-hot pincers; they concluded by burning his breasts. While his enemies were in this way wearying themselves by their new inventions of torture, Leclerc's mind was at rest. He recited solemnly, and in a loud voice, the words of the psalmist: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throats. They that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them. O Israel, trust thou in the Lord: He is their help and their shield." (Psa. 115: 4-9) After

these tortures, Leclerc was burnt by a slow fire. Such was the death of the first martyr of the gospel in France.<sup>371</sup>

But the priests of Metz were not satisfied with the blood of the poor wool-comber. **Dean Chatelain** had embraced the Reform doctrines, and could not be shaken from the faith. He was denounced before the cardinal of Lorraine, stripped of his priestly vestments, and in a layman's dress, handed over to the secular power, which condemned him to be burnt alive: and soon the minister of Christ was consumed in the flames. But the effect of these tragedies, as might have been expected, was to cause Lutheranism to spread through the whole district of Metz. "The beholders," says a chronicler "were astonished; nor were they untouched by compassion and not a few retired from the sad scenes to confess the gospel for which they had seen the martyrs, with so serene and noble a fortitude, lay down their lives."

### REFLECTIONS ON THE FALL OF BRISSONNET

It is difficult to leave the ashes of Leclerc without a mournful thought of the poor bishop. If Leclerc is to be condemned for his indiscretion, he must be admired for his courage. But what of Brissonnet? Having many friends at court, he saved his mitre, his palace, and his riches; but at the cost of conscience, truth, and a crown of life. "What Brissonnet's reflections may have been," says Wylie, "as he saw one after another of his former flock go to the stake, and from the stake to heaven, we shall not venture to guess. May there not have been moments when he felt as if the mitre which he had saved at so great a cost, was burning his brow, and that even yet he must needs arise and leave his palace with all its honours, and by the way of the dungeon and the stake, rejoin the members of his former flock who had preceded him, by this same road, and inherit with them honours and joys, higher far than any the pope or the king of France had to bestow. But whatever he felt, and whatever at times may have been his secret resolutions, we know that his thoughts and purposes never ripened into acts."

Humanly speaking, we are disposed to attribute the fall of Brissonnet to a natural weakness of character, the deceitfulness of riches, and the influence of plausible friends. His case was conducted with closed doors before a commission, so that it is unknown to what extent he renounced the faith he had preached, and laboured to diffuse with a zeal apparently so ardent and so sincere. He remained in communion with Rome till his death — which happened a few years after his recantation — and contrived so to live, that there should be no more question about his orthodoxy.

By judging of such cases in the present day, there are many things to consider. They were just emerging from the darkness, superstitions, and indescribable wickedness of popery. Men of pure and pious minds, such as Brissonnet really was, saw the great need of Reform, and honestly wished to promote it,

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<sup>371</sup> D'Aubigné, vol. 3, p. 582.

although they may not have contemplated a complete secession from her communion. The idea of separation as taught by our Lord in John 17, where He gives the disciples His own place of rejection on earth, and His own place of acceptance in heaven, formed no part in the teaching of those early times. Luther, a man of deep convictions and strong faith, was never really separated in spirit from the *idolatry* of Rome. He was no image-breaker, and his doctrine of the sacraments contradicted the truth he preached.

The heavenly relations of the Christian and the church not being seen, there was very little separating truth in the teaching of the early Reformers. It was chiefly doctrinal; comparatively little for the heart. The dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the saints individually, and in the assembly as the house of God, and the hope of the Lord's return, were overlooked by the Reformers in the sixteenth century. So that we must make great allowance, and not think too hardly of some who hesitated, or even drew back for a time, when they saw the stake; and, on the other hand, we must admire the grace of God which triumphed in many who knew very little truth. The Holy Spirit was their teacher, and they knew what was necessary to their own salvation and the glory of God.

### **THE CONVERSION AND FAITH OF LOUIS BERQUIN**

One of the most illustrious victims of those early times was **Louis Berquin**, a gentleman of Artois, and an officer of the king's body-guard. "He would have been another Luther for France," says Beza, "if he had found in Francis another Elector of Saxony." Unlike the knights of his time, acquainted only with the helmet and the sword, he was learned, contemplative, frank, open-hearted, and generous to the poor. He had acquired a great reputation at the court of Francis; and, being sheltered by the powerful patronage of his royal master, he studied diligently the works of the Reformers, and soon became one of the most zealous of their converts. His conversion, through the grace of God, proved to be genuine. His learning, his eloquence, his influence, were from that hour all consecrated to the service of the gospel. Many looked to him as the Reformer of his native land. His leisure hours were spent in translating the works of Luther Melancthon, and Erasmus into French, and writing tracts on the leading doctrines of the christian faith, which he privately printed himself.

This heretic, though Bida, is worse than Luther, but so unobtrusive was this christian knight, that it was difficult to find a charge on which to found an indictment of heresy. Spies were now employed. A rigorous watch was kept over every word uttered by Berquin. At length witnesses were found to prove that he had asserted it was heretical to invoke the Virgin Mary instead of the Holy Spirit before the sermon in the mass. This was enough; the Syndic, obtaining authority from the parliament to search the dwelling of Berquin made a forcible seizure of his books and papers, which he laid before the faculty of theology. These were condemned as having a heretical tendency,

and Berquin was thrown into prison. "This one," said the sanguinary Beda, "shall not escape us, like Brissonnet and Lefevre." He was kept in solitary confinement, preparatory to his formal trial and certain condemnation to the stake.

Margaret, who had ever professed admiration of Berquin's talents, and had distinguished him by marks of her regard was immediately informed of his fate, and asked to interest herself in his favour. With the unhappy case of her friend Brissonnet before her, and dreading to see Berquin dragged to the stake, she wrote to her brother. She represented to the king the insolence of the Sorbonne in daring to arrest one of his officers upon so frivolous a pretence, without having first ascertained his royal pleasure. The suggestion touched the pride of Francis who broke out into violent transports of passion, menaced the parliament, and sent an order for the instant liberation of his officer. A second time he was imprisoned, and again the king came to his rescue, advising him to be more prudent. But his strong convictions of duty, as a witness for Christ, could not be suppressed. He laboured to spread the truth among the poor in the country, and among his friends in the city, and at the court. But the burning desire of his heart was to communicate his convictions to all France. A third time he was imprisoned, and the Sorbonne thought that this time they had made sure of their prey. The king was a prisoner at Madrid; Louisa was all-powerful at Paris, and along with Duprat, the unprincipled chancellor supported the persecutors. But no: Margaret's word again prevailed with her impulsive brother, and a royal order dated April 1st, 1526, commanded the suspension of the matter until the king's return.

When again at liberty, his lukewarm friends entreated him to avoid giving offence to the doctors who had evidently marked him for destruction. Erasmus, in particular, who, having learned that he was about to publish a translation of one of his Latin works with the addition of notes, wrote to him letter upon letter to persuade him to desist. "Leave these hornets alone," he said, "above all, do not mix me up in these things; my burden is already heavy enough. If it is your pleasure to dispute, be it so; as for me, I have no desire of the kind." Again he wrote, "Ask for an embassy to some foreign country, travel in Germany. You know Beda and his familiars, a thousand-headed hydra is shooting out its venom on all sides. The name of your enemies is Legion. Were your cause better than that of Jesus Christ, they will not let you go until they have brought you to a cruel end. Do not trust in the protection of the king. But in any case do not commit me with the faculty of theology." This letter, so characteristic of the timid philosopher, who always steered a middle course between the gospel and popery, only redoubled the courage of Berquin. He determined to stand no longer on the defensive, but to attack. He set to work, and extracted from the writings of Beda and his brethren, twelve propositions which he accused before Francis of being false, contrary to the Bible, and heretical.

The Sorbonnists were confounded. The outcry was tremendous. What! even the defenders of the faith, the pillars of the church, taxed with heresy by a Lutheran, who had deserved death a thousand times.<sup>372</sup> The king, however, not sorry to have an opportunity of humbling these turbulent doctors, commanded them to condemn or to establish the twelve propositions from scripture. This might have been a difficult task for the doctors, the matter was assuming a grave turn, when an accident occurred which turned everything in favour of the Sorbonne. An image of the Virgin happened to be mutilated just at that moment in one of the quarters of Paris. "It is a vast plot," cried the priests; "it is a great conspiracy against religion, against the prince, against the order and tranquillity of the country! All laws will be overthrown; all dignities abolished: this is the fruit of the doctrines preached by Berquin!" At the cries of the Sorbonne, the priests, the parliament, and of the people, the king himself was greatly excited. Death to the image-breakers! No quarter to the heretics! And Berquin is in prison a fourth time.

### **THE SENTENCE OF THE SORBONNE, AND THE MARTYRDOM OF BERQUIN**

A commission of twelve, delegated by the parliament, condemned him to make a public abjuration, then remain in prison without books, pen or paper, for the rest of his life after having had his tongue pierced with a hot iron. "I appeal to the king," exclaimed Berquin. "If you do not submit to our sentence," replied one of the judges, "we will find means to stop your appeals for ever." "I would rather die," said Berquin, "than only approve by my silence that the truth is thus condemned." "Let him then be strangled and burned upon the place de Greve!" said the judges with one voice. But it was deemed advisable to delay the execution till Francis was absent; for it was feared lest his lingering affection for his favorite and loyal servant might be awakened, and that he might order Berquin's release a fourth time.

A week's delay was craved in the execution of the sentence. "Not a day," said Beda; "let him be put to death at once." That same day, April 22nd, 1529, Berquin was led forth to die. Six hundred soldiers and a vast stream of spectators escorted him to the place of execution. Erasmus, on the testimony of an eyewitness, thus describes his appearance. "He showed no sign of depression. You would have said, that he was in his library pursuing his studies, or in a temple meditating on things divine. When the executioner, with husky voice, read to him his sentence, he never changed countenance. He alighted from the cart with a firm step. But his was not the stoical indifference of the hardened criminal, it was the serenity, the peace of a good conscience." As a peer of France, he was dressed according to his dignity: "he wore a cloak of velvet, a doublet of satin and damask, and golden hose;" there was no sign of mourning, but rather as if he were to appear at court; though not the court of Francis, but the court of heaven.

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<sup>372</sup> Felice, p. 26.

Wishing to make known the Saviour to the poor people around him, Berquin tried to speak to them, but he could not be heard. The monks gave the signal, and instantly, the clamour of voices, and the clash of arms, prevented the sacred words of the dying martyr being heard. But his death spoke to all France, and that, in a voice which no clamours could silence. The fire had done its work, and where had stood the noble of France and the humble Christian, there was now a heap of ashes. “**Berquin’s stake** was to be, in some good measure, to France, what Ridley’s was to England — a candle which by God’s grace, would not be put out, but would shine through all that realm.”<sup>373</sup>

### **THE RAPID SPREAD OF THE REFORM DOCTRINES**

The two examples of martyrdom which we have given — one from the humbler and one from the higher ranks of life — may be considered as types of a vast crowd of others. Our limited space prevents us from recording the patient sufferings and the triumphant death of many noble witnesses for Christ. But notwithstanding the violence of the persecution the converts were more numerous than ever. The fame of Francis I as showing favour to men of learning, and having, through the influence of his sister, invited Melancthon to take up his residence in Paris, led many of the Reformers in Germany and Switzerland to visit France and help on the good work of the Lord. In this way the writings of Luther, Zwingli, and others, found an entrance into that country, were extensively read, and the new opinions made rapid progress among all classes of the people. Here and there missionaries of the Reformation arose, congregations were formed, and from time to time, one and another, torn from the prayer-meeting or the scripture reading, went to seal his faith with his blood.

But in 1533 better days seemed to dawn on the Reformation. The queen-mother, Louisa of Savoy, one of its bitterest persecutors, had just died. Francis had made an alliance with the Protestants of the Smalcald league, and the influence of Margaret had thence increased. Taking advantage of this favourable moment, she opened the pulpits of Paris to Roussel, Courault, and Bertault, who leaned towards the Reformed doctrines. The bishop, John du Bellay, offered no opposition. The churches were crowded; Beda and the doctors of the Sorbonne tried to raise the people, but were prevented. Meanwhile Francis returned to Paris from Marseilles, where he had an interview with Clement VII for the marriage of his son Henry with **Catherine de Medici**. His renewed friendship with the pope, Catherine’s uncle, strongly bent his mind against the heretics. Many of them were cast into prison, and the three suspected ministers interdicted from preaching.

Such was Francis I, on whose humour so much depended. On the important subject of religion he had never come to a decision; he neither knew what he

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<sup>373</sup> Wylie, vol. 2, p. 162; D’Aubigné’s *Calvin*, vol. 2, p. 56; Felice, p. 27.

was nor what he wished. Still, from his natural hatred of the monks, and the powerful influence of his sister, he had hitherto favoured the Reformers. But an incident, for which the latter were much to blame, took place about this time, which ended the many struggles between Margaret and her brother as to the conduct to be pursued towards the Reformers, and also put an end to the king's vacillation.

Many of the Reformers were led, or rather misled, to depend upon the favour of the court for the furtherance of the gospel, and proposed to proceed moderately, desiring to do nothing that might offend. These were called **Temporizers**. The other party, called the *Scripturalists*, thought that they should place no dependence on the favour of princes, but boldly preach the gospel and resist everything that might bring back the superstitions of Rome. The young church of France being thus divided, they agreed to consult their old teachers, Farel and the other exiles. A young Christian, by name Feret, accepted the mission and proceeded to Switzerland. Scarcely had he crossed the Jura when a spectacle, so different from Paris, met his eye. In the towns and villages the altars were being demolished, the idols cast down, and all idolatry removed from public worship. This, as we have already seen was the work of Farel, Viret, Saunier, Olivetan Froment, and others. But France was altogether different. A powerful prince and a haughty priesthood were there to contend with a mere handful of Reformers.

“These medleys of the gospel and popery,” said the Swiss evangelists, “can never exist together, any more than fire and water.” They recommended bold measures. A vigorous blow must be struck at that which is the citadel of the papal empire. The mass must be abolished. “If the papal hierarchy was the tree whose deadly shade killed the living seeds of the word, the mass was its root.” The writing and posting of placards all over France was proposed.

### **THE YEAR OF THE PLACARDS**

At length the **evangelical protest** was written. Farel has been commonly credited with the authorship. Historians vie with each other in describing the violence of its style. “Indignation guided his daring pen,” says one. “It was a torrent of scathing fire;” says another. “It was a thunderbolt, fierce terrific, and grand, resembling one of those tempests that gather in awful darkness on the summits of those mountains amid which the document was written, and finally explode in flashes which irradiate the whole heavens, and in volleys of sound which shake the plains over which the awful reverberations are rolled.”<sup>374</sup>

When the placards reached Paris, many of the Christians thought the style too bitter and violent, but the majority were in favour of their publication. A night was fixed, October 18th, 1534, for the work to be done all over France. The eventful night came, and the venerable walls of the university of Paris,

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<sup>374</sup> Wylie, vol. 2; D'Aubigné's *Calvin*, vol. 3; Felice, p. 35; Freer, vol. 2, p. 138.

the public buildings of the capital, the church doors, and the Sorbonne itself were covered with placards. The movement was simultaneous throughout France. The placard was headed in large letters — “True articles on the horrible, great and intolerable abuses of the popish mass, invented in direct opposition to the holy supper of our Lord and only Mediator and Saviour Jesus Christ.” Popes, cardinals, bishops, monks, and every distinguishing tenet of the Romish faith were attacked with sharpest invectives. The long placard — which occupies over five pages in d'Aubigné's history — thus concludes, “In fine, truth has deserted them, truth threatens them, truth chases them, truth fills them with fear; by all which shall their reign be shortly destroyed for ever.”

No language can describe the one universal cry of rage and consternation which resounded throughout France on the morning of the 19th. The people gathered in groups around the placards. The priests and monks kindled the rage. The Lutherans, it was said, had laid a frightful plot for burning the churches, firing the town, and massacring every one; and the whole multitude shouted, **Death! death to the heretics!** The king at the time was living at the Chateau de Blois. A placard was pasted — no doubt by the hand of an enemy — on the very door of the king's apartment. Montmorency and the Cardinal de Tournon drew the king's attention to the paper. The prince was greatly agitated, he grew pale and speechless. He saw therein an insult, not only against his authority, but against his person, and these enemies of the Reformation — Montmorency and Tournon — so fixed this notion in his mind, that in his wrath he exclaimed, “Let all be seized, and let Lutheranism be totally exterminated.” The members of the faculties also demanded that by a general auto-da-fe the daring blasphemy might be avenged.

Now it was that the storm, long held back by a good providence, burst forth in awful fury. The king was fully committed to the system of persecution. But, making every allowance for the times, the Reformers were not free from blame. Would the apostles have written and posted such placards? We have no standard of action, no guide but the word of God. Yet there can be only one feeling towards the sufferers — that of tenderest compassion. Orders were immediately issued by the king to seize the Sacramentarians, dead or alive. By the help of a traitor, their houses were pointed out and all were in a short time seized and thrown into prison. The criminal officer having entered the house of one, named **Bartholomew Millon**, a cripple, wholly helpless in body, said to him, “Come, get thee up.” “Alas! sir,” said the poor paralytic, “it must be a greater master than thee to raise me up.” The sergeants carried him out, but so full of peace and holy courage was Bartholomew, that his companions in captivity grew firm through his exhortations. Formerly, when lifted by his friends, he felt pain in every limb, but the Lord in great mercy took that sensitiveness away, s

## THE EXECUTIONS

The trial of the Lutherans was soon over, and the **executions began**. An expiation was required for the purification of France, and the heretics must be offered in sacrifice. The burning piles were distributed over all the quarters of Paris and the executions followed on successive days. **Millon** was the first. The turnkey entered his cell, lifted him in his arms, and placed him on a tumbril — a cart. The procession then took its course towards the Place de Greve. Passing his father's house, he smiled, bidding adieu to his old home, as one in sight of that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. "Lower the flames," said the officer in command, "the sentence says he is to be burnt at a slow fire." He had to be lifted and flung into the flames, but he bore his lingering tortures as if miraculously sustained. Only words of peace, with great sweetness of spirit, dropped from his lips, while his soul, ransomed by the precious blood of Jesus, ascended on angels' wings to the paradise of God.

A long list of names follows: **du Bourg**, of the Rue St. Denis, Calvin's friend, was the next; and many persons of distinction suffered at that time, and many, having warning, made their escape.

While these tumultuous scenes were convulsing the capital, Margaret was residing at her castle of Nerac. The news filled her with dismay. Her enemies, now that they had the ear of the king, laboured to inflame his mind against her. In times past, the slightest reflection on the reputation of his beloved sister would have been instantly and vehemently silenced by Francis. But now, in his gloomy state of mind, he listened to the representations of his ministers. It was insinuated to the king, that "if he had a mind to extirpate the heretics out of his kingdom, he must begin by his court and his nearest relations." **Margaret** was summoned to Paris. She immediately obeyed, confident in the integrity of her intentions, the love of her brother, and fearless of the hostile theologians, whom she neither dreaded nor respected. For the first time, perhaps, in his life, Francis received Margaret at the Louvre with cold severity, and reproached her for the evils which her support of heresy had brought on his kingdom. Margaret wept, but she concealed her tears from her angry brother. She gently expostulated with him, and soon found that bigotry had not quite extinguished his love for her. She became bolder, and ventured to suggest that it was the intolerance of the fanatical party that had filled the kingdom with discord. She was as grieved about the placards as he was, but felt sure that none of the ministers whom she knew had any hand in their publication.

Without entering into particulars, we need only further add, that her entreaties obtained the liberation of the three preachers — Roussel, Berthault, and Couralt; and that the king's countenance was changed towards those who had maligned the motives of his sister. Her presence in Paris, for a time, hindered the designs of the persecutors; but as Francis was determined to command a public procession through the streets of Paris to cleanse away the

pollution of the placards, she petitioned the king to permit her departure into Beam, which he reluctantly granted.

## **THE PROCESSION AND MARTYRDOMS**

On the 21st of January, 1535, the “**peace offering**” procession marched through the most public streets of Paris in gloomy majesty, and striking awe into the hearts of all beholders. The houses along the line of procession were hung with mourning drapery. All the religious orders of Paris took part in the procession, bearing aloft the sacred relics possessed by their respective convents — the head of St. Louis, the patron saint of France, a piece of the true cross, the real crown of thorns, a holy nail, and also the spear-head which had pierced the side of our Lord. On no former occasion had so many relics been paraded in the streets of Paris. The cardinals, archbishops, and bishops followed, wearing their robes and mitres. They immediately preceded the host, which was borne by the bishop of Paris, under a canopy of crimson velvet, supported by the dauphin, the dukes of Orleans, of Angouleme, and of Vendome. Around the holy sacrament marched two hundred gentlemen of the king’s household, each bearing a torch. The king followed on foot with his head bare, carrying a burning torch of white virgin-wax, surrounded by his children and the princes of the blood royal. Afterwards came a countless throng of all the noblemen of the court, princes, ambassadors, and foreigners, each carrying a flaming torch. In front of their houses stood the burgesses with lighted tapers, who sank on their knees as the holy sacrament passed them. But the end of the procession was not yet; it still moved on in mournful silence; the guilds of the capital, the municipality, the officers of the courts, the Swiss guards, the choristers of the royal chapels — amounting to several thousand persons, and every individual carrying a lighted taper. This was the comedy of the fanatical frenzy of the king, the tragedy was to follow, “to implore the mercy of the Redeemer for the insult offered to the sacrifice of the mass.”

Having marched from the church of the Louvre to Notre Dame, the king seated himself on a throne, and then pronounced a harangue against the new opinions, as violent as thought could suggest, or words express. “If my arm were infected with this pestilence,” he said, “I would cut it off. If one of my children were so wretched as to favour this new Reform, and to wish to make profession of it, I would sacrifice him myself to the justice of God, and to my own justice.” From declamation he proceeded to action. The same day **six Lutherans were burned alive**. The most courageous had their tongues cut out, lest they should offer a word of exhortation to the people, or be heard praying to God. They were suspended on a moveable gibbet, which, rising and falling by turns, plunged them into the fire, where they were left a few moments, then raised into the air, and again plunged into the flames; and this continued until the ropes that fastened them to the beam were consumed; then, for the last time, they fell amid the burning faggots, and in a few moments

their souls ascended, as in a chariot of fire, to the bright realms of unmingled and eternal blessedness.

### RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

The epoch of persecution and martyrdom was now solemnly inaugurated in France. The **21st of January** must be a date of evil omen in that land of revolutions. Two hundred and fifty-eight years after Francis had devoted to death the humble followers of Christ, one of the simplest and most generous of the Bourbons was condemned to death by misguided and furious men, and received his death-blow on the **twenty-first of January, 1793**. The sight must have been beyond all conception pitiful. The poor king, Louis XVI, unlike the martyrs of his predecessors, who laid down their lives willingly for Jesus' sake, was dragged by his gaolers to the block, and held down by force till the axe gleamed in the air, and his head rolled on the scaffold. The coincidence of these dates is most striking and suggestive but we offer no comments, those who have studied history aright, will surely believe in a just and retributive providence. But God gives none account of His ways; or, as the psalmist says, "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters and Thy footsteps are not known." (Ps. 77:19)

Felice, the historian of the Protestants of France, observes with reference to this dismal day, "that it marks an important date in our history, for it was from this moment that the Parisian populace took part in the contest against the heretics; and once mounted on the stage, they never quitted it until the end of the league. In the chain of events this procession, intermingled with executions, was the first of the bloody days of the sixteenth century, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the Barricades, the murder of Henry III and the assassination of Henry IV, could but follow" — p. 36.

The Protestant princes of Germany, justly indignant when they heard of the cruelties of Francis, threatened to ally themselves against him with the house of Austria. Fearing a breach, he sent in the following spring an ambassador to Smalcald. His excuse was that of all persecutors in every age — "seditious tendency." Those whom he had put to death were men of a rebellious spirit, sacramentarians, and not Lutherans. He even professed a strong desire for better information respecting their doctrines, in order, no doubt, to effect a reconciliation with the league of Smalcald, and requested that one of their most eminent divines might be sent to his court. He attempted to induce Melancthon to take up his abode in Paris; but his double dealings and hypocrisies availed little: Melancthon refused, and the Smalcald league objected to an alliance with the persecutor of their brethren.

The gloomy determination, which had now taken possession of Francis to crush heresy, decided Margaret to leave Paris. She retired to her own little **kingdom of Bearn**, an ancient province of France. Her court became the asylum of the celebrated men who escaped from persecution. "Many refugee

families brought their industry and their fortunes. Everything assumed a new face. The laws were corrected, the arts cultivated, agriculture was improved, schools were established, and the people were prepared to receive the teaching of the Reformation. In a short time, the foundations were laid of that remarkable prosperity which made the little kingdom in the Pyrenees resemble an oasis amid the desert which France and Spain were now beginning to become.”<sup>375</sup>

Margaret, the pious queen of Navarre, died, 1549; and was deeply lamented by the Bearnais, who loved to repeat her generous saying, “Kings and princes are not the lords and masters of their inferiors, but only ministers whom God has set up to serve and to keep them.” She was the mother of **Jeanne d’Albret**, one of the most illustrious women in history, and grandmother of Henry IV.

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<sup>375</sup> *History of Protestantism*, vol. 2, p. 212.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 51

### THE GREAT PROGRESS OF THE REFORMATION

Towards the end of the reign of Francis, and under that of his son, Henry II, the Reform movement made such rapid progress, that it becomes utterly impossible in our "Short Papers" to follow it in all its details. We can do little more than give a mere outline of the principal events from the death of Francis I till the massacre on the eve of St. Bartholomew.

**Francis** lived and died as kings generally do. He commenced his reign with great splendour, but closed it in darkness and dismal forebodings. When he ascended the throne all was brilliant and loyal; he was surrounded by a vast assemblage of gallant knights, and with few exceptions, chieftains of the princely aristocracy of France; and the noblest ladies of the realm were in attendance on their gentle mistress, queen Claude, or, rather, as the female ornaments of his court. But how different when he descended from the throne to the grave! The luxury of his court, its chivalry, its festivals, its pageants, which were once the admiration of Europe, afford him no comfort now. In excruciating agonies of body from the life he had led, and in deep anguish of soul from what had been done by his orders; "He groans deeply; his starts are sudden and violent. There flits at times, across his face, a dark shadow, as if some horrible sight afflicting him with unutterable woe, were disclosed to him; and a quick tremor at these moments runs through all his frame." He is heard to mutter, as if suffering from an accusing conscience, "I am not to blame; my orders were exceeded" — referring, no doubt, to the merciless slaughter of the unoffending Waldenses. He was surrounded by a crowd of priests, courtiers, and courtesans, but they cared nothing for the dying monarch; they only increased the weight of his agony by their cold selfish indifference.

The scene closes, the last groan is uttered, the line is crossed, and the soul, under a responsibility entirely its own, appears before God. Solemn thought! all is reality now. The judgment-seat cannot bend to royal prerogative. There is no respect of persons with God, every man must be judged according to the deeds done in the body. But what must be the judgment of those who stand there with hands red, and garments stained with the blood of God's saints? Nothing but a timely repentance, and the efficacy of the precious blood of Jesus could cleanse such guilt away. May all those who are willing to pause a few moments over the melancholy scene of these closing hours believe this, and turn to the Lord Jesus, God's Son, whose blood cleanses from *all* sin. "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out," are His own words of gracious assurance. Three hundred years have rolled away since Louisa,

Francis, and Margaret died. We cannot help lingering a moment over this solemn thought, that our reader may be prepared for that change which admits of no succeeding change for ever. Every tree is known by its fruits; and as the tree falls so it lies. Who would not say that Margaret's was the happiest course of the three? True, she had in her lifetime to suffer reproach and shame for the name of Christ, and be branded as a heretic, but she willingly identified herself with the suffering saints of God, and great is her reward in heaven. Better suffer for a few years, and even die at the stake, than be three hundred years in hell, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9: 44-50; Matt. 5: 10-12)

Reader! O reader, beware! God is not mocked; as a man sows in time, so shall he reap in eternity!

## HENRY II

Francis I died in 1547, and was succeeded by his son, **Henry II**, the husband of the notorious **Catherine de Medici**, who, like Jezebel of old, was well fitted and inclined to stir him up to persecute the Naboths, and take possession of their vineyards. And this was actually done to a great extent, and the confiscations applied in many instances to the most shameful purposes. Surrounded by hostile and designing councillors, besides the example of his father and the influence of his wife, he was indeed *stirred up* to pursue a persecuting policy, and a great multitude of martyrs fell during his reign. When the great battle of St. Quentin was lost, and the Spaniards expected daily at the gates of Paris, the old pagan cry against the primitive Christians was raised — "We have not sufficiently avenged the honour of God, and God takes vengeance upon us." The disaster was ascribed to the mildness with which the heretics had been treated. So it was when Rome was attacked by the barbarians; the pagans accused themselves of having been too lenient towards the Christians.

The clergy, becoming alarmed at the unaccountable progress of the Reformation, used every artifice to alarm the king. They assured him that the **Huguenots** were the great enemies of monarchs and of all ecclesiastical and regal power; that, should they prevail they would trample his throne in the dust, and lay France at the feet of atheists and revolutionists. The effect of these misrepresentations, which were chiefly made by the cardinal de Lorraine, was to multiply the executions; and as they were viewed as appeasing the wrath of heaven, the more the king himself sinned, the more he burned to atone for his sins. But so great was the energy of God's Spirit in connection with the spread of Bibles and religious books, that all the means used to exterminate the Huguenots proved utterly fruitless. Exceeding great armies seemed to arise from the ashes of the martyrs. "Men of letters," says Felice, "of the law, of the sword, of the church itself, hastened to the banner of the Reformation. Several great provinces — Languedoc, Dauphiny, the Lyonnese, Guienne, Saintonge, Poitou, the Orleanese, Normandy, Picardy,

Flanders (the most considerable towns in the kingdom) Bourges, Orleans, Rouen, Lyon Bordeaux, Toulouse, Montpellier, La Rochelle — were peopled with Reformers. It is calculated that they comprised in a few years nearly a sixth of the population, of whom they were the *elite*.”

And still the funeral piles blazed in all quarters of Paris, and in all towns of France; and persons of all ages and both sexes fed the flames, suffering the most fearful barbarities and tortures. But as the rigour of the persecutions increased the number of the disciples multiplied. Among these were now enrolled princes of the blood, the king of Navarre, the duke of Vendome, the Bourbons, prince of Conde, Coligny Chatillon, and a great number of the nobility and gentry of France. “Besides these,” says a catholic historian, “painters, watchmakers, sculptors, goldsmiths, booksellers, printers and others, who, from their callings have some nobility of mind, were among the first easily impressed.”<sup>376</sup>

Meanwhile, **Farel** and his fellow exiles, were inundating France with religious books and Bibles from the printing presses of Geneva, Lausanne, and Neuchatel, by means of pedlars, who hazarded their lives to introduce the precious wares into the mansion of the noble, and the hut of the peasant.

The king’s alarm grew great. A little longer, and all France would be Lutheran. The first and most sacred duty of a prince, said his councillors, was to uphold the true religion, and cut off its enemies. The irritated prince proceeded to the House of Parliament to consult his senators as to the best means of appeasing the religious differences in the realm. This event happened on the 10th of August, 1559. Though the presence of the king may have been intended to overawe the members, it did not prevent them from speaking freely on the subject. The chief president, Gilles Lemaitre, spoke in favour of burning, and recommended the example of Philip Augustus to be followed, who had in one day caused six hundred of the Albigenses to be burned. The men of middle course confined themselves to vague generalities. The secret Calvinists, especially Annas du Bourg, demanded religious reforms by means of a national council. “Every day,” he said, “we see crimes committed that go unpunished, while new torments are invented against men who have committed no crime. Should those be guilty of high treason who mentioned the name of the prince only to pray for him? and should the rack and the stake be reserved, not for those who raised tumults in the cities, and seditions in the provinces, but for those who were the brightest patterns of obedience to the laws, and the firmest defenders of order? It was a very grave matter to condemn to the flames men who died calling on the name of the Lord Jesus.”

The angry king stung to fury by the honest speech of **du Bourg**, ordered him to be arrested in full parliament by the captain of his guards, and said aloud

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<sup>376</sup> Felice, p. 52; Wylie, vol. 2, p. 522.

that he would see him burned with his own eyes. He was thrown into the Bastille, and other members were arrested the following day. Fourteen days after this memorable visit to his parliament, Henry was displaying his strength and skill as a cavalier, in a tournament, to the admiration of many. He had resisted the attacks of the duke of Savoy and the duke of Guise, the two best generals in the service of France, and might have left the gay scene amidst the praise and acclamations of the ladies and nobles of Paris; but he insisted on having a tilt with count Montgomery, the captain of his guards. He meant, no doubt, to give the king the best of the shock, like his other assailants, but by some mismanagement, the lance of Montgomery broke in the king's visor, and a splinter passed through his eye to the brain: the king lay forward on his horse; a thrill of horror ran through the spectators. He died soon after, but never saw with his eyes the burning of du Bourg; and, as the Lord would have it, the same hand that arrested the senator dealt the death-blow to the monarch.

### **THE MARTYRDOM OF DU BOURG**

The death of the king did not release the prisoners. du Bourg heard his sentence read without a change of countenance. As a criminal of the deepest dye, his execution was reserved for the Christmas holidays, December, 1559. "I am a Christian; yes, I am a Christian;" he said, "and I will shout still louder for the glory of my Lord Jesus Christ." When suspended on the gibbet, he proclaimed the truth to the vast crowds around him, and cried aloud, "My God, my God, forsake me not, that I may not forsake Thee."

Thus died this pious and illustrious magistrate at the age of thirty-eight. He belonged to a good family; his uncle had been chancellor of France. He was a man of great learning, integrity, and devotion to his duties. His only fault was, that he had spoken in favour of the new religion. Florimond de Ramond, then a student, avows, "that everyone in the colleges was moved to tears; that they pleaded his cause after his death, and that his martyrdom did more harm to the Catholic religion than a hundred ministers could have done by their preaching."

### **THE FIRST PLANTING OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN FRANCE**

It was in the year 1555, that the **first avowed French church on Reformed principles** was established at Paris. Forty years had passed away since Lefevre first preached the gospel in the university, during which time we have met with many noble disciples, confessors, and martyrs, but no public congregations. There had always been secret gatherings of the faithful, but without fixed pastors or regular administration of the sacraments. Calvin was their acknowledged leader, and he recommended them not to observe the Lord's supper until they had duly recognized ministers. In consequence of this, though they were a large body in the aggregate, they were as isolated

individuals, acting a part from each other, without the knowledge of the grand uniting principle — the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them,” ought to have been warrant enough for remembering His love, and showing forth His death in the breaking of bread.

A church was now formed in Paris on the Genevan or Presbyterian model, with a minister, elders, and deacons. Poitiers, Angers, Bourges, and other places soon followed the example. From this time, the work or organization went on vigorously, and in the short period of five years, over **a thousand Calvinistic congregations** existed in France. The next step to be taken was the uniting of these isolated churches into one general church; and for this purpose a general Synod was convoked to meet at Paris, which took place on the 25th of May, 1559. But the difficulties that attended the ministers travelling from all parts of France was so great, that only thirteen churches sent their deputies to the Synod: and these braved an almost certain death. “There was in the deliberations of this assembly,” says Felice, “a simplicity and moral grandeur that fills us with respect. Nothing of declamation or violence but a calm dignity, a tranquil and serene force prevailed, as if the members of the Synod debated in a profound peace, under the guardianship of the laws.”

The ecclesiastical foundations of the French Reformation were then laid. The basis consisted of four grades of power, or church courts. 1. The consistory, or kirk-session — composed of the elders and deacons, the minister being their president; the affairs of the congregation were the objects of their care. 2. The colloquy, or the congregations of a district consulting each other by their deputies on their mutual interests. 3. The provincial Synod, or court of appeal from the kirk-session, in a meeting of the churches of the province. If possible, the minister and an elder from each were expected to be present. 4. The national assembly. Two ministers and two elders were expected from each of the provincial Synods. It was the highest court; it heard all appeals; determined all great causes; and to its authority, in the last resort, all were subject.<sup>377</sup>

## FRANCIS II

The new King, **Francis II**, was about sixteen years old when he ascended the throne. He is represented as a sickly boy, feeble in body and mind; and his wife, Mary Stuart of Scotland, a thoughtless beauty, spending her time in pleasure, was about the same age. Thus was monarchy represented in France in 1559; when a strong hand and a powerful will were required to protect the royal authority. The profligacy and extravagance of the last reign had borne their natural fruits. There was anger and discontent all over the land; the court was a hot-bed of intrigue, and the nation, broken into factions, was on

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<sup>377</sup> For minute details of this ecclesiastical constitution, see Felice, Wylie, or *Faiths of the World*.

the brink of civil war. Catherine de Medici, the Guises, Chatillons, Bourbons, the constable Montmorency, all worked to their own advantage these feeble children of royalty, and mingled with the religious discussions, the quarrels of their political ambition.

The two **Guises**, the cardinal and the general, became managers of the court. Uncles of the fair young queen, and guardians of the feeble sovereign, they had the ear of both, which gave them immense advantages over their rivals. But there was one at the foot of the throne who was a match both for the general and the cardinal. The queen-mother, Catherine de Medici, hated the Huguenots as much as the Guises — who were the heads of the Roman Catholic party — but she also hated all who would supplant her in power. Artful and vindictive, unscrupulous and ambitious, without religious faith or moral feeling, the crafty Italian dissembled that she might ruin the authority of the Guises, in order to consolidate her own. This threw Catherine for a moment on the side of the Huguenot party, which was overruled by a merciful providence to weaken the power of the Guises, divide the strength of the popish party, and save the Reformers. Affecting to hold the balance between the two parties, she was only biding her time in all changes of circumstances, by turns embracing and deserting all parties alike.

We now come to the **wars of religion**. Parties began to be formed from political motives, which threw the whole of France into the most ruinous, desolating, civil war, which lasted, with brief intervals, for many years — we might say, centuries. All the liberalism of France became Huguenot, which then simply meant *antipapist*. And thus, to their great injury and final destruction, the French Protestants became a great political party in the state. Meanwhile Francis II, after a reign of seventeen months, died; and Catherine, emerging from the obscurity in which she had restrained her ambition, claimed the custody of her next son, Charles IX, who was only nine years of age; and before the court could assemble, assumed the guardianship of the king, and in fact, if not in name, the regency of the kingdom.

### **THE SAINT BARTHOLOMEW MASSACRE**

The Italian mother, having thus become supreme in the kingdom, began to mature her plans for stamping out heresy in the dominions of her son. Possessed in an eminent degree of the family arts of dissimulation and concealment, she pursued, with steadiness of purpose and recklessness of means, the object before her. She has justly been compared to the shark which follows the vessel through storm and calm in expectation of its prey. The country was divided into two, apparently equally matched, and irreconcilable camps. Several campaigns had been fought, and there was no immediate prospect of the Catholics overcoming the Huguenots in the field; therefore Jezebel has recourse to her old policy — which she thoroughly understood — treachery and secret assassination. At the same time, it is affirmed by Felice, that no state reason can be advanced in justification of the massacre. Rome had

no longer anything to fear for her supremacy, or the crown for the maintenance of its political power. It was fanaticism, resentment, Jezebel's unquenchable thirst for the blood of God's saints, which led to the crushing of the minority in 1572.

The first and real **authors of the massacre** were Catherine, Pope Pius V, and Philip II of Spain — none of them French. Others were drawn into the plot, but nothing could be done without the sanction of the king. The mother, with the assistance of the pope, accomplished this. By a gross perversion of scripture, the crafty pontiff pointed out to the young king that he was now in the position of Saul, king of Israel, who had received the orders of God, by the mouth of Samuel the prophet, to exterminate the infidel Amalekites, and not to spare one in any case. But as he did not obey the voice of God, he was deprived of his throne and his life. Charles saw the application of the allusion, and ultimately consented to kill all the Huguenots, that not one might be left to reproach him with the deed.

### **THE KING'S SNARE TO ENTRAP THE HUGUENOTS**

The next question was, How is it to be accomplished? The chiefs of the Reformed were in the provinces. It was necessary to draw them out and concentrate them, in order to get them into their power. The perfidious Charles, who was now committed to the plot, pretended an earnest desire for the establishment of a lasting peace, and proposed a marriage between the young king of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV, and his sister, Margaret of Valois. This was a grand alliance for the poor house of Navarre, but the mother, Jeanne d'Albret, was not dazzled by it. She preferred the fear of the Lord to great riches. "I would rather," she said, "descend to be the most humble maiden of France, than sacrifice my soul and that of my son to grandeur." But the greatest Reformer in France must be brought within the toils of Catherine.

**Jeanne d'Albret** was the daughter of the accomplished and pious Margaret of Angouleme; but the daughter in some respects was greater than her mother; at least she was more decided as to the Reformation. But it is due to Margaret to bear in mind that she was greatly hindered by her dissolute brother and mother. In 1560 Jeanne d'Albret made open profession of the Protestant faith; abolished the popish service throughout her kingdom, and introduced the Protestant worship. When we remember that her little kingdom lay on the slope of the Pyrenees, touching France on the one side, and Spain on the other, we shall not consider her wanting in courage. The popes thundered their anathemas against her, the powerful kings of France and Spain threatened to invade her territory and raze it from the map of Europe; but for twelve years the Lord protected this pious queen, during which time she had the Bible translated into the dialect of the country, established colleges and schools, studied laws like a senator, and mightily improved the condition of her subjects.

The next person of great note was **Admiral Coligny**. He was a true Christian, a really godly man, and the most skilful leader of the Huguenot armies. The envoys of the court set before Jeanne, Coligny, and the chiefs of the Huguenots, that this marriage would be the best guarantee of a solid peace between the two religions. Charles declared that he married his sister, not only to the prince of Navarre, but to the whole Huguenot party. Coligny allowed himself to be deceived; the prospect was indeed bright; the entire kingdom would be united; and he thought they should trust the sincerity and oath of his majesty.

### **THE KING'S CONSUMMATE DUPLICITY**

At last Jeanne d'Albret gave her consent to the marriage, and visited the court at Blois in March, 1572 but leaving her son behind her from a lingering feeling of distrust. The king and the queen-mother caressed her with much apparent tenderness; especially the king, who called her his great aunt, his all, his best-beloved, and entertained her with so much honour and respect that everyone was astonished. She reached Paris in May, on the 4th of June she fell ill, on the 9th she died. It was said that a Florentine perfumer, Master Rene, known by the name of the **"queen's poisoner,"** had sold her some poisoned gloves. Her end was peace, she was happy to go home, she uttered no complaints against her murderers, and seemed only anxious for the spiritual welfare of her son Henry and her daughter Catherine. Committing them to the Lord's tender care, she fell asleep in Jesus at the age of forty-four.

Admiral Coligny had also gone to court. In his first interview he knelt before the king. Charles raised him up, called him his father, and embraced the illustrious old man thrice. "We have got you now," said the king, "and you must remain with us. This is the happiest day of my life." The other chiefs of the Huguenots being assembled in Paris, the marriage was celebrated with great splendour in the cathedral church of Notre Dame on the 18th of August, 1572 the principal members of the nobility, Protestant as well as Catholic, being present on the occasion. It was followed by a succession of feasts and gaieties, in which the leaders of both parties alike participated; and the fears of the Huguenots were thus completely disarmed. Charles by his dissimulation, and Catherine by her treacherous smiles, had succeeded in deceiving all parties. Indeed all seemed to hope that the age of bloodshed was closed, and that this marriage was the harbinger of a peaceful and prosperous future for a country so long afflicted with civil wars. But at that very moment, when all classes were rejoicing and full of hope, a secret council was held, at which it was determined to arrange a general massacre of the Huguenots.

Fifty thousand crowns was offered by the king for the head of Coligny, whom Charles was embracing so warmly only a day before. To earn the reward, one Maurevert lay in wait for the admiral on the 22nd of August, in a house near the church of St. Germain. He was struck by three balls shot from an

arquebuss, which shattered the forefinger of his left hand, and wounded his left arm. The assassin escaped, he is styled by historians of that day "*The slayer on the king's wages, the common assassin.*" Coligny succeeded in reaching his hotel, where he was attended by the celebrated surgeon Ambrose Pare. The king and his mother, like two innocents visited the admiral, professed the greatest horror at the dastardly act, swore that they would take such terrible revenge that it should never be forgotten. "You bear the wound," said the king, "and I the perpetual pain" — unparalleled deceitfulness!

### SAINT BARTHOLOMEW'S EVE

Meanwhile the day fixed for the general massacre drew near. Between two and three o'clock in the morning of the 24th of August — the **feast of St. Bartholomew** — as the king sat in his chamber with his mother and the duke of Anjou the great bell of St. Germain rang to early prayers. This was the preconcerted signal. Scarcely had its first peal disturbed the silent hour of midnight, when the firing commenced. Charles was greatly agitated: a cold sweat stood upon his forehead; he started, and sent word to the duke of Guise to precipitate nothing. It was too late. The queen-mother, distrusting the constancy of her son, had commanded that the hour for a signal should be anticipated. In a few moments every steeple in Paris was sending forth its peals, and with the clamour of a hundred bells, there mingled the shoutings, cursings, and howlings of the assassins; and the shrieks, groans, and cries for mercy of the surprised Huguenots. To distinguish the assailants in the dark, they wore a white sash on their left arm, and a white cross on their hats. At the sound of the tocsin armed men rushed out from every door, shouting, "For God and the king." The streets of Paris flowed with human blood, and the savage ferocity of the Catholics knew no bounds.

The **duke of Guise**, accompanied by three hundred soldiers, hastened to the dwelling of Coligny. He had been awakened by the noise of firing, and dreading the worst, was engaged in prayer with his minister Merlin. His servants came rushing into his room, exclaiming, "Sire! the house is broken into, and there is no means of escape!" "I have been long prepared to die," answered the admiral calmly, "as for you, save yourselves if you can; you cannot save my life." Behem, a servant of the duke of Guise, was the first to enter the room. "Are you not the admiral?" he demanded. "Yes, I am," replied Coligny, looking with great composure on the naked sword of the assassin; and began to say a few serious words to the young man, who instantly plunged his sword into the veteran's breast, and gave him a second blow on the head. Guise who was waiting impatiently in the courtyard, called aloud, "Behem hast thou done it?" "It is done, my lord," was the reply. "But we must see it to believe it: throw him out at the window." In lifting up the body of the admiral, who was still breathing, he clutched the window-frame, but was instantly flung into the courtyard. The duke of Guise, wiping off the blood from his face, said; "I know him, it is he," and kicking the dead body

with his foot, he hastened into the streets, exclaiming, "Courage, comrades, we have begun well — now for the rest." Sixteen years afterwards, in the castle of Blois, this same Henry of Guise was assassinated by order of Henry III, who, when the dead body lay before him, kicked it in the face. Oh! the sovereign retributive justice of God!

In that awful night, Teligny, son-in-law of the admiral, and five hundred of the Protestant nobility and gentry, were sacrificed to the Moloch of bigotry, and that in the sacred name of religion. "Thick grass is more easily mown than thin," was the proverb acted upon, and the leading Protestants were lodged in the same quarter of Paris. This field was kept as the special preserve for the grim, cruel duke of Guise. The retinue of the young king of Navarre were lodged in the Louvre, as the special guests of the monarch, but with the Satanic intention of having them all conveniently murdered. They had come in the train of their royal chief to be present at the celebration of his marriage with the sister of the king. One by one they were called by name from their rooms, marched down unarmed into the quadrangle, where they were hewn down before the very eyes of their royal host, and piled in heaps at the gates of the Louvre. A more perfidious cold-blooded butchery is not to be found in the annals of mankind.

Over all Paris the **work of massacre** by this time extended. Ruffians by thousands — armed with the poignard, the pike, the knife, the sword, the arquebuss, every weapon of the soldier and the brigand — rushed through the streets murdering all they met who had not the white cross on their hats. They forced their way into the houses of the Protestants slaughtered the inmates in their night-clothes, men, women and children, and threw their mangled bodies into the streets. No pitiful wail for mercy was heard; the obscurest haunts were searched, and nobody was spared. By-and-by the sun rose upon Paris. The wretched Charles, who had shuddered for some moments at the commencement of the massacre, had tasted the blood of the saints, and became as ravenous for slaughter as the lowest of the mob. He and his blood-stained Italian mother, at the break of day went out on the palace balcony to feast their eyes on the slaughtered heaps. Rivers of blood flowed in the streets; corpses of men, women, and children blocked up the doorways; on all sides the groans and death-cries of the dying were heard, and the blasphemies and imprecations of the maddened populace.

Some, however, who had managed to escape were seen struggling in the river, in their efforts to swim across, and Charles seizing an arquebuss, fired on his subjects, shouting "Kill! Kill!" "Two hundred and twenty-seven years afterwards," says Felice, "Mirabeau picked the arquebuss of Charles IX out of the dust of ages to turn it against the throne of Louis XVI." Satan may rule for a time, but God overrules! On the same Sunday morning, Charles sent for Henry of Navarre, his new brother-in-law, and Henry of Conde; and, in the most furious tone said to them: "*The Mass, death, or the Bastille.*" After some resistance, the princes consented to attend mass, but no one believed in their

sincerity. On the fourth day, when the fury of the assassins had become satiated, and the Huguenots were for the most part slain, there fell a dead silence on the streets of Paris. The priests now followed the tragic scene with a play. On the Thursday, ankle-deep in blood, the clergy celebrated an extraordinary jubilee, and made a general procession to keep up the excitement. The pulpits also re-echoed with thanksgiving, and a medal was struck with this legend, "*Piety has awakened justice.*"

## MASSACRE IN THE PROVINCES

But the thirst of Jezebel for blood was far from being satisfied. Orders were sent from the court to all the provinces and principal cities to pursue the same course. About a dozen of the provincial governors refused, and one priest whose **name** deserves to be mentioned with thankfulness to the Lord. When the king's lieutenant called on **John Hennuyer**, bishop of Lisieux, and gave him the order for the massacre of the Huguenots, he answered, "No, no, sir; I oppose, and will always oppose the execution of such an order. I am the pastor of Lisieux, and these people whom you command me to slaughter are my flock. Although they have at present strayed, having quitted the pasture which Jesus Christ, the sovereign Shepherd, has confided to my care, they may still come back. I do not see in the gospel that the shepherd can permit the blood of his sheep to be shed; on the contrary, I find there, that he is bound to give his blood and his life for them." The lieutenant asked him for his refusal in writing, which the bishop readily gave him.

At Rouen, Toulouse, Orleans, Lyon, and in nearly all the great towns of the kingdom, the work of blood was renewed with undiminished fury; the carnage went on without pity and without remorse for about six weeks. Thousands of dead bodies were thrown into the rivers, which were either washed on shore at different bends of the rivers, or borne to the sea. The faithful of Meaux — our early friends — were slaughtered in the prisons, and, the sword being too slow, iron hammers were employed. Four hundred houses in the most handsome quarter of the town were pillaged and devastated. But we grow weary, weary of this recital; and were it not that the St. Bartholomew massacre is **the greatest and darkest crime of the christian era** — and gives us, as nothing else does, a true picture of the essential principles of popery — we should willingly have ended our notice of the Reformation in France before coming to it. If ever the depths and wiles of Satan were seen in human wickedness, it is here. The premeditation, the solemn oaths of the king — which drew the Calvinists to Paris — the royal marriage, and the dagger put into the hands of the mob by the chiefs of the state, at a time of universal peace, represent a plot which has no parallel in history. And then, from the pope downwards, the Catholic community lifting up their hands to heaven, and thanking God for the glorious triumph!

At Rome the news was received with transports of joy. The bearer of the glad tidings was rewarded with a present of a thousand pieces of gold. The pope

caused the guns of the castle of St. Angelo to be fired, declared a jubilee, and struck a medal in honour of the event. Philip II of Spain, the duke of Alva, and the cardinal of Lorraine, shared in these transports of joy. But the impression produced by the massacre in Protestant countries was altogether different. In England, Germany, and Switzerland, numbers of exiles arrived, horror-struck and half-dead, to tell the sad tale; and the petrified nations cursed the name of France. Geneva tenderly related to the **seventy thousand victims** whose bodies covered the plains of France, or lay stranded on the banks of its rivers, instituted a day of fasting and prayer, which is still observed. In Scotland, the aged **Knox**, in prophetic strains, pronounced the divine vengeance against the house of Valois in the following terms: "The sentence is gone forth against this murderer, the king of France, and the vengeance of God will not be withdrawn from his house. His name shall be held in execration by posterity, and no one who shall spring from his loins shall possess the kingdom in peace, unless repentance come to prevent the judgment of God." In England, **Elizabeth** put her court into mourning, and when the French ambassador sought an audience to offer his hypocritical explanation, he was received with profound silence. The lords and ladies of the court, in long mourning apparel, suffered the ambassador to pass between them without saluting him, or deigning to give him so much as a look.

### **THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS**

The whole number that perished in the massacre cannot be accurately ascertained. The victims in Paris were probably from three to four thousand. Brantome says that Charles IX might have seen four thousand bodies floating down the Seine. "There is to be found," says Wylie, "in the account-books of the city of Paris, a payment to the grave-diggers of the cemetery of the Innocents, for having interred one thousand one hundred dead bodies stranded at the turns of the Seine, near Chaillot, Auteuil, and St. Cloud. It is probable that many corpses were carried still further, and the bodies were not all thrown into the river." The number of victims throughout the whole of France was probably about seventy thousand. Perefice, archbishop of Paris, in the seventeenth century, raises it to one hundred thousand. "This last figure," says Felice, "is probably exaggerated, if we reckon those only who met with a violent death. But if there be added those who died of misery, hunger, grief, the aged, who were helpless and abandoned, women without shelter, children without bread, the many wretched beings whose lives were shortened by this great catastrophe, it will be confessed that the number given by Perefice is still below the truth."<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> The above account of the massacre is chiefly drawn from the French historian, Felice, who is more inclined to abridge than to exaggerate the details of his nation's dishonour. See also, Wylie's *History of Protestantism*; Smiles' *History of the Huguenots*; White's *History of France*.

## THE END OF THE LEADING ACTORS IN THE MASSACRE

So wonderfully had the Spirit of God wrought in France by means of the truth, that when men expected to see only the ruins of the crushed Huguenots after the massacre, they were surprised to find them resolved in many parts of the country to offer a determined resistance to the royal troops. There can be no doubt that **French Protestantism** had become a great political association; but not wholly so. There must have been many thousands of real Christians amongst them, though led to believe that it was right to oppose their oppressors, and fight for their lives, their families, and their religion. In the siege of Sancerre, when nearly all the young children died from hunger, we give one instance of perfect grace. A boy of ten years old, drawing nigh unto death, seeing his parents weeping near him, and handling his arms and legs, which were as dry as wood, said to them, “Why do you weep to see me die of hunger? I do not ask you for bread mother. I know you have none. But since God wills that I must thus die, we must be content. The holy Lazarus, did he not suffer hunger? Have I not read that in the Bible?” Thus passed away that precious lamb, with many others, to be folded in the everlasting embrace of the Good Shepherd who died for them; of them may not it be truly said, “they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun [of persecution] light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” (Rev. 7:16, 17)

But not so died the perfidious and cruel king. The terrible crime in which he had taken so prominent a part, weighed heavily on his mind to the last moment of his life. Night and day **he was haunted** by the scenes he had witnessed on St. Bartholomew’s eve. He imagined he saw his murdered guests sitting at his bedside and at his table. Sleeping or waking, the murdered Huguenots seemed ever present to his eyes with ghastly faces, and weltering in blood. But, as the Lord would have it, he — who had stipulated when giving his orders for the St. Bartholomew massacre, that not a Huguenot should be left alive to reproach him with the deed — was attended on his deathbed by a Huguenot physician, and waited upon by a Huguenot nurse. He evidently had not the slightest confidence in any of his former associates, he was even haunted by the terrible feeling that his own mother was causing his death by slow poisoning. He died of a strange and frightful malady, which caused his blood to ooze from the pores of his body, in less than two years after the St. Bartholomew massacre, having lived twenty-five years and reigned fourteen.

It is said that all the actors in the St. Bartholomew massacre, with one exception, **died by violence**. But we need not trace their tragic history. These bloody men were overtaken by divine vengeance, and brought down to the grave in blood. Catherine de Medici lived to see the utter failure of all her schemes, the death of all her partners in guilt, and the extinction of her dynasty. The Cardinal of Lorraine was assassinated in prison, and Henry III,

the last of the Valois, fell by the dagger of the assassin in his own tent, and thus was the prophecy of John Knox fulfilled.

The vast materials furnished by the Reformation in France have detained us a little longer, and occupied more of our space than we can well afford; but the greatness of the Lord's work there, the mighty struggle between light and darkness, and the melancholy interest which all must feel in the results of that work, give it a peculiar place in the great revolutions of the sixteenth century.

## **THE COUNCIL OF TRENT**

At the famous **Council of Trent**, which met in 1545, and continued its sittings till 1563, during which the events we have rapidly described were in progress, the laws of the Roman Catholic church were more accurately defined, and measures were devised for the more effectual suppression of heresy. Their deliberations and decisions must have been greatly affected by the general state of Europe at that particular moment. But as the original object and character of this council have been already noticed,<sup>379</sup> we need only add what has not been previously mentioned.

What particularly distinguished this council was not the framing of new laws, but undertaking to define and fix the doctrines of the Romish church in a more accurate manner than had ever before been attempted, and to confirm them by the sanction of its authority. "The Trentine fathers," says Mosheim, "authorized nothing new; but it is equally true, that they authorized much, hitherto thought, from its want of any sufficient authority, open to individual acceptance or rejection. To these divines, therefore, forming a body chiefly Italian and Spanish, sitting in the sixteenth century... is the church of Rome indebted for the formal authentication of her peculiar creed." By the servility of the indigent Italian bishops, the popes acquired such influence in the council, that they dictated all its decrees, and framed them, not with any intention of healing the divisions, reforming the ancient abuses, restoring unity and concord to the church, but to establish their own dominion. "Doctrines," says Scott "which had hitherto been considered as mere private opinions, open to discussion, were now absurdly made articles of faith, and required to be received on pain of excommunication. Rites — which had formerly been observed only in deference to custom — supposed to be ancient, were established by the decrees of the church, and declared to be essential parts of its worship."<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> See Chapter 46: "The Opening of the Council of Trent".

<sup>380</sup> Mosheim, vol. 3, p. 894; Scott, vol. 3, p. 256. The great authority as to our knowledge of the proceedings of this assembly is Father Paul's History. "He has described its deliberations," says Dr. Robertson, "and explained its decrees, with such perspicuity and depth of thought, with such various erudition, and such force of reason, as have justly entitled his work to be placed among the most admired historical compositions."

## POPE PIUS'S CREED

**Pope Pius IV** issued a brief summary of the doctrinal decisions of the council, which is called by his name, and has ever since been regarded as an authoritative summary of the Catholic faith.

“I profess also, that there are truly and properly seven sacraments of the new law, instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, and for the salvation of mankind, though all are not necessary for every one; namely, baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, orders, and matrimony, and that they confer grace; and of these, baptism, confirmation, and orders cannot be reiterated without sacrilege.

“I also receive and admit the ceremonies of the Catholic church, received and approved in the solemn administration of all the above said sacraments.

“I receive and embrace all and every one of the things which have been defined and declared in the holy Council of Trent, concerning original sin and justification.

“I profess likewise, that in the mass is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead; and that, in the most holy sacrifice of the Eucharist, there is truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, which conversion the Catholic church calls transubstantiation.

“I confess also, that under either kind alone, whole and entire, Christ and a true sacrament is received.

“I constantly hold that there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained therein are helped by the suffrages of the faithful.

“Likewise, that the saints reigning together with Christ, are to be honoured and invoked; that they offer prayers to God for us, and that their relics are to be venerated.

“I most firmly assert, that the images of Christ, and of the mother of God, ever virgin, and also of the other saints, are to be had and retained; and that one honour and veneration are to be given to them.

“I also affirm that the power of indulgences was left by Christ in the church, and that the use of them is most wholesome to christian people.

“I acknowledge the holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman church, the mother and mistress of all churches. And I promise to swear true obedience to the Roman bishop, the successor of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, and vicar of Jesus Christ.

“I also profess, and undoubtedly receive all other things delivered, defined, and declared, by the sacred canons and general councils, and particularly by the holy Council of Trent. And likewise, I also condemn, reject, and anathematise, all things contrary thereto, and all heresies whatsoever condemned, rejected, and anathematised by the church.

“This true Catholic faith, out of which none can be saved, which I now freely profess, and truly hold, I, N., promise, vow, and swear most constantly to hold and profess the same whole and entire, with God’s assistance, to the end of my life; and to procure, as far as lies in my power, that the same shall be held, taught, and preached by all who are under me, or are entrusted to my care, by virtue of my office. So help me God, and these holy Gospels of God.”

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 52

### THE WALDENSES

Having brought down the history of this interesting people to the year 1560,<sup>381</sup> when they suffered so severely in their own valleys, and on the **plains of Calabria**, we shall now briefly notice their history from that period. Yet we must not expect to find in this remarkable people the grace that should characterize the followers of the blessed Lord and His apostles. Not that they did not believe in the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, and in His precious blood as the only and all-sufficient remedy for sin. And had they been left unmolested in their beautiful valleys, they would have been as harmless as their flocks and herds; but when assailed and persecuted by the Catholics, they looked upon Joshua Gideon, and David as their models, not the Lord and His apostles. And being sincere and honest, and believing that their God was the God of battles, they fought under His banner, and believed that nothing was impossible to Him. It is no doubt from this principle that their persecutions form one of the most heroic pages in the church's history. Like many in our own day, they did not see the difference between law and grace; but being a God-fearing people, He graciously heard and answered their prayers. Allegiance to Christ ruled in their hearts, which, after all, is the chief thing. The Scotch covenanters who fought for the crown and kingdom of Emmanuel resemble them in this.

Such were “the poor men of the valleys.” They believed the Bible to be a revelation from God, and were governed by it, so far as they understood it. Their neighbours, the Catholics, on the other hand, believed that God had given to the church of Rome and its head, dominion over the whole christian world, and that all who refuse subjection to her authority are not only heretics, but rebellious subjects, whom the sovereign has a right to punish according to his pleasure. This was and is the established belief of Rome; and, seeing it remains so, there could be no security for life or liberty to any who dared to question her claims, had she the power to execute her arrogant assumption. Sometimes the magistrate refused to obey the priest, and the people were thereby spared; but the reader will see how easily Rome could find a plausible pretext for persecution when it suited her purpose, and how constantly the mitre prevailed over the crown.

For some time after the **desolating wars of 1560** the remnant of the Waldenses were allowed to re-enter their native valleys rebuild their houses, and replant their vineyards. Their fruit trees had been cut down, their hamlets and villages made a heap of ruins, and their fields left uncultivated and

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<sup>381</sup> See Chapter 29: “The Dark Year of 1560”.

unsown. Starvation stared them in the face; but a deeper grief weighed on the hearts of many. Where are our parents, husbands, sons, pastors, and many whom the enemy hath trodden down? They were now with the Lord and the Lord in His unfailing mercy, was with them; and from the nature of the country, it was not difficult to exist for a time.

“Chestnut trees of luxuriant growth,” says Dr. Beattie, speaking of the **valley of Rora**, “shade the inferior acclivities, and from these, in seasons of scarcity, a wholesome bread is prepared, which, with the luxury of new milk, furnishes a repast which the daintiest appetite might partake of with a relish. Over the higher grounds nature has spread a rich carpet of vegetation; and thither, as the pastoral season arrives, the inhabitants repair with their families and cattle. After spending their summer on the hills, in a life of patriarchal simplicity, they again descend to the valley as symptoms of winter set in, and there prosecute those branches of industry by which they may best satisfy the state, and minister to their own mutual necessities.” Speaking of the **valley of Angrogna**, the same poetical writer says, “When we describe it as a picture in miniature of Switzerland, the reader will form a just conception of its general features. All the ingredients of Alpine landscape, torrents, rocks, precipices, gloomy ravines, and gushing fountains, forests that at once afford shelter and sustenance verdant meadows to which the meandering streams carry freshness and fertility, fields and gardens containing the produce of different climates clinging to the very precipices, and evincing that unwearied industry on the part of the inhabitants which has purchased the means of life under the most unfavourable circumstances.”<sup>382</sup>

Reflecting on the primitive simplicity of the natives of these valleys, their peaceful lives, their industrious habits their rigid morality, their strict observance of the *sabbath day*, their exactness in paying their rents and all claims, and the absence of drinking, swearing, and all such vices, we may well inquire, Why should their prince and landlord seek to exterminate the race? The answer will be found in what follows.

## **THE WARS OF EXTERMINATION**

The brief periods of apparent peace which the Waldenses sometimes enjoyed, were by no means intervals of security and repose; but rather, of painful reflection and fearful anticipation. True peace, with security as to their persons, their property, and liberty of conscience — the inalienable rights of man, they knew not for hundreds of years.

In the year 1560 two events occurred which are sufficient to account for the exterminating wars which followed that period. 1. **The throne of Savoy** was then filled by Charles Emmanuel II, a youth of fifteen. He was a prince of a mild and humane disposition; but, like Charles IX of France, he was

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<sup>382</sup> *History of the Waldenses, and Graphic Descriptions of the Protestant Valleys of Piedmont*, by Wm. Beattie, M.D.

counselled by his mother, and she was of the house of Medici, and granddaughter to that Catherine whose deeds of blood have justly merited the execrations of mankind. The boy-sovereign was ruled by his mother, who was regent during his minority, and she was ruled by the Vatican. 2. The Society for the “**Propagation of the Faith**” was established in the same year at Turin. Noble lords, ladies, laymen, priests, and people, pressed to join the society, the inducement being a plenary indulgence to all who should take part in the good work: the watchword reveals its character —” The conversion or the extermination of heretics.”

The propagandists commenced their ruinous work under the fair pretext of conversion. Ladies of the court, and others of inferior rank, with swarms of monks, became zealous supporters of the society, visiting from house to house. About this time convents were established in the valleys, and the schools and colleges of the Vaudois were suppressed. The abduction of males under twelve and of females under fourteen years of age, for the purpose of conversion, was sanctioned by law. But these nefarious means were soon followed by a violent persecution similar to that of 1560.

“The bloody **edict of Gastaldo**” — so named from its consequences — appeared in January, 1655. In vain did the threatened inhabitants, by every means of appeal and supplication to the different members of the government, seek to avert the impending storm. More than a thousand families, in the depth of winter, were driven from their homes and properties to the shelterless heights of their ice-covered mountains. And this they were commanded to do within three days on pain of death. Anything more inhuman, more barbarous, under the circumstances, cannot be imagined. A whole population, including little children, old men, the sick, the feeble, and the bed-ridden, must leave their homes amidst the terrors of an Alpine winter. Their journey lay through valleys buried deep in snow, across rivers swollen with the flood, and over mountains covered with ice. True an alternative was offered them: they might go to mass. The historian Leger informs us that he had a congregation of well-nigh two thousand persons, and that not a man of them all accepted the alternative. “I can well bear them this testimony,” he observes, “seeing I was their pastor for eleven years, and I knew every one of them by name; judge, reader whether I had not cause to weep for joy, as well as for sorrow, when I saw that all the fury of these wolves was not able to influence one of these lambs, and that no earthly advantage could shake their constancy. And when I marked the traces of their blood on the snow and ice over which they had dragged their lacerated limbs, had I not cause to bless God that I had seen accomplished in their poor bodies what remained of the measure of the sufferings of Christ, and especially when I beheld this heavy cross borne by them with a fortitude so noble?”<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Quoted by Wylie, vol. 2, p. 482.

## THE TREACHERY OF PIANESSA

“Had the persecution ended here,” says Mr. Hugh Acland, “humanity would yet have been saved from an indelible stain. The **marquess of Pianessa** entered the valleys at the head of fifteen thousand men; the consequent massacre is too horrible for detailed narration.” Only a part of the Waldenses had suffered from the decree of Gastaldo, but the fixed object of the propaganda was the extirpation of the entire race. The marquess, being well aware of the desperate resistance he must encounter if the Vaudois should flee and unite in the mountains, betook himself to the old weapon of Jezebel — treachery. He feigned a wish for conciliation, and invited deputies to confer on the necessary terms. The wiles of the enemy alas! were successful. Well skilled in craftiness, he thoroughly deceived the simple honest-hearted Vaudois, after treating them with great kindness, and assuring them that all would be amicably settled, if they would receive as a token of fidelity on their part, a small company of soldiers in the different villages. Some of the more sagacious, especially the pastor Leger, suspected treachery; but the people in general, willing to hope for a time of peace, opened the doors of their houses to the soldiers of Pianessa. Two days were spent in great friendliness; the soldiers and the villagers eating at the same table, sleeping under the same roof and conversing freely together. These two days were employed by the enemy in making preparations for the general massacre. The villages and roads throughout the valleys were occupied by the soldiers.

At four o’clock on the morning of the third day, April 24th, a signal was given from the castle, and the assassins began **their work of death**. But with the exception of pastor Leger, no historian attempts to give details; and he did it as a matter of duty, being an eyewitness, and had his narrative verified by others. A priest and a monk accompanied each party of soldiers, to set fire to the houses as soon as the inmates had been despatched. “Our valley of Lucerne,” exclaims Leger, “which was like a Goshen, was now converted into a Mount Etna, darting forth cinders, and fire, and flames. The earth resembled a furnace, and the air was filled with a darkness like that of Egypt, which might be felt, from the smoke of towns, villages, temples, mansions, granges, and buildings, all burning in the flames of the Vatican.” But here, it was not as in the St. Bartholomew massacre, the instant despatch of their victims but the deliberate invention of barbarities and cruelties hitherto unknown. As many of the strongest escaped by their knowledge of the hills, tiny children, their mothers, the sick, and the aged were the chief victims of the soldiers of the propaganda. But we would not subject our readers to the heart-sickening details of Leger’s awful narrative.

## THE FAITH AND HEROISM OF GIANAVELLO

During this terrible persecution which carried fire and sword into so many of the valleys, Rora had its full proportion of calamity; but it called forth one of those ardent spirits which from time to time God raises up to exhibit those

virtues which are seldom brought into action but in moments of great emergency. We allude to **Joshua Gianavello**, a native of the valley of Rora, but truly a mighty man of valour, whose genius and intrepidity are the subject of unqualified admiration. On the morning of the 24th, which witnessed the merciless slaughter in the valleys of Lucerne, Angrogna, La Torre, Villar, St. John, and others, a similar doom was intended for Rora, and Count Christovel, with four hundred soldiers, was charged with its execution.

Gianavello had narrowly watched their movements, and, seconded by a small determined band, seven in all, he threw himself into the defile by which the enemy was advancing upon Rora. There was not a moment to lose. The soldiers — naturally thinking that the ruthless proceedings on the other side of the Pelice had paralysed all further resistance, and ensured them an easy entrance into Rora — advanced with little attention to order. Under cover of the rocks and trees Gianavello and his band could hear the conversation, and as one of the soldiers, counting on their work being easily observed, that the people of Rora would only be waiting to bid us welcome. “We do!” exclaimed a voice of thunder when a volley of musketry from right and left carried death into the advancing column. Seven of the troop were killed. Then, reloading their pieces, and quickly changing their ground, they fired again with a like effect. No enemy was visible; but the volume of curling smoke that rolled down the rocks, convinced them that they were caught between two fires. Thrown into utter confusion by this unexpected salutation, they began to retreat in terror and precipitation. But Gianavello and his men bounding from cover to cover kept up a deadly fire, until the superstitious soldiers began to feel as if every tree discharged a bullet. Fifty-four of their number were left dead behind them, and Rora was saved from the meditated destruction.

The disgrace which attached to this enterprise Pianessa resolved to retrieve by a fresh attempt. He organized a battalion of nearly a thousand men to cross the mountain. Fully aware that such would be the case, Gianavello was on the watch and saw the enemy enter. His band was now increased to seventeen men — eleven good marksmen and six expert slingers. When the invaders had advanced to a certain point, this invisible army opened so galling a fire upon them that they were again driven back to their quarters with great loss.

The news of this second defeat was the signal for vengeance. To increase his host, Pianessa ordered detachments from the neighbouring stations, and having completed his muster, sent them once more on the pass to Rora. The numbers were so overwhelming on this occasion that the patriot and his band waited for a favourable moment. Meanwhile they knelt down in prayer and gave thanks to God who had twice by their hands saved the people, and prayed that their hearts and arms might be strengthened to work yet another deliverance. A company of soldiers, laden with booty, were immediately attacked; and, as if possessed by a superstitious terror, endeavoured to make their escape, throwing away their plunder. Their flight became most disastrous; great pieces of rock were rolled down upon them, mingled with

deadly bullets; and many in their haste fell over the precipices, so that only a few survived.

But in place of the blinded bigot, Pianessa, seeing in these events the finger of God, he was only the more inflamed with rage, and jealous for his own military character. He assembled all the royal troops — to the number of eight or ten thousand men — and calling his officers together, he held a council of war. What was to be done? A mere handful of peasants had foiled the tactics of a disciplined army; and the troops were charged with cowardice and incapacity. It was resolved that the whole army should be divided into three separate companies, and, by a simultaneous movement from every accessible avenue, secure the destruction of Rora. To meet this overwhelming force, Gianavello was compelled to take up his position on the summit of the pass, and while bravely combating with the first troop of three thousand, the other divisions forced a passage in the opposite direction.

### THE MASSACRE

The village of Rora is now in the hands of the pope's soldiers, who, meeting with little resistance, abandoned themselves to the work of destruction. The inhabitants consisted of old men, women and children; the effective members of the community were now expanding their patriotic efforts on the frontier. A general massacre followed. Nearly ten thousand assassins fell upon the helpless and unoffending peasants with all the impetuosity of wolves rushing upon a fold. No distinction was made of age or sex. Happy they who were slain at once, and thus escaped indignities and barbarities, to which we cannot give utterance. "Every soldier," says Dr. Beattie, "took upon himself the office of an executioner, till the devoted hamlet presented the spectacle of a vast scaffold strewn with victims, and streaming with blood. When the morning sun rose upon the village, not a voice was heard, nor a hearth left standing; but a mass of smouldering ashes, through which protruded at intervals the ghastly features of the slain, carried its appeal to the gates of heaven" — page 56.

The wife and three daughters of Gianavello, Pianessa spared from the sword that he might work on the feelings of the father and husband. He threatened to burn them alive unless he surrendered himself a prisoner and abjured his religion. **Gianavello nobly replied:** "As for the first condition, my wife and children are in thy hands, and if such be God's will, thou mayest accomplish thy threat; but this barbarous act can only affect their bodies, for which their religion teaches them not to be over-solicitous. If brought to the stake, they will be supported in the hour of trial. Their faith is proof against terror, and enables the innocent to look with complacent eye upon what is terrible only to the guilty. What was once said to Pilate, I now say to Pianessa: — 'Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above.' As to the question of *apostasy*, shall I abjure these principles I have so long defended with my blood — principles unchangeable as the word

of God? Shall I desert His cause for the hopes of a renegade? No! in that cause which I have thus feebly espoused, — I am ready to perish. The terrors of the Inquisition are mild, compared with the upbraidings of conscience; and I shall never incur the one by shrinking from the other.” He escaped to Geneva.

What could Pianessa do? What could the papal armies do? What could the legions of hell do against a religion that produced such faith in God, and such champions for His truth? They might crush for a time the feeble few, “the poor of the flock,” and seem to triumph; but God is in the midst of them, and in the most wonderful manner preserves a remnant for Himself, a seed to serve Him, the *silver link* in the unbroken chain of witnesses; and the happy day will come when He will vindicate their cause in the presence of an assembled universe, and lifting up their heads on high, He will honour them with the martyr’s crown, while their enemies, covered with shame and branded with eternal infamy, will seek the darkest regions of the lost that they may conceal the enormity of their guilt, and the undying agonies of hopeless despair. Those shrieks and groans of the dying which echoed and re-echoed among the Alpine hills shall be heard again; and those quivering limbs of frightened children for whom there was no pity shall be seen again, but in awful frightful vision. Haunted by such sights and sounds, with a load of guilt which now oppresses the imagination, what must that place of torment be? What vitality to the worm that never dies, what vehemence to the flame that shall never be quenched, must the recollection of such deeds for ever give! Still the grand truth remains, that, by a timely repentance and a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus, our sins, however many, are all washed away; but the soul that dies impenitent is lost for ever!

### THE SYMPATHY OF ENGLAND

**The Protestant states** of Europe were horror-struck when they heard of these massacres. But nowhere did the cry from the valleys awaken a deeper sympathy, or draw forth a stronger expression of indignation, than in England. “**Cromwell**, who was then at the head of the state, proclaimed a fast, ordered a collection for the sufferers, and wrote to all the Protestant princes, and to the king of France, with the intent of enlisting their sympathy and aid on behalf of the Vaudois. **Milton**, the Protector’s Latin secretary, wrote the letters, and in token of the deep interest Cromwell took in this affair, he sent Sir Samuel Morland with a letter to the duke of Savoy.”<sup>384</sup>

The ambassador wisely visited the valleys on his way to Turin, and saw with his own eyes the frightful desolations which they still presented. After a partial allusion to the cruelties he was sent by the Protector to complain of, he, with great plainness and fervour of speech, proceeded: “Why should I mention more? Though I could enumerate infinitely more, did not my mind altogether revolt from them. If all the tyrants of all times and ages were alive

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<sup>384</sup> *History of Protestantism*, vol. 2, p. 486.

again — I speak without offence to your royal highness, as convinced that none of these things are to be attributed to your highness — they would doubtless be ashamed to find that nothing barbarous, nor inhuman, in comparison of these deeds, had ever been invented by them. In the meantime the angels are stricken with horror! Men are dizzy with amazement! Heaven itself appears astonished by the cries of the dying, and the very earth to blush with the gore of so many innocent persons! Avenge not Thyself, O God, for this mighty wickedness, this parricidal slaughter. Let Thy blood, O Christ, wash out this blood!”

**Ambassadors** from the cantons of Switzerland, Geneva, Holland, and the Protestants of France, all denounced the late cruelties in the strongest terms. “So deep an interest was perhaps never displayed on any other occasion, neither as to the number of potentates partaking in it, nor as to the vast sums contributed to relieve the greatly afflicted Waldenses.”<sup>385</sup>

The **duke of Savoy**, pretending to listen to such remonstrances, was induced to propose peace to the “men of the valleys.” The youthful prince found himself completely deceived by his mother and her advisers. He had lost thousands of his best subjects, the best tillers of the ground, the best rent-payers, the most faithful to his throne; but more — he had lost the best of his army, and spent his treasure. He declared that “to kill one Vaudois cost him fifteen soldiers.” But what was his advantage? It was all loss in this life, but the priests assured him that he had secured the favour of heaven.

When the “**Grand Monarch**,” Louis XIV of France asked his confessor, father Le Chaise, “By what good deed as a king, he might atone for his many sins as a man.” “Extirpate Protestantism from France,” was the Jesuit’s ready reply. He speedily complied, and revoked the edict of Nantes, which led to the slaughter and banishment of tens — we may say, of hundreds — of thousands of God’s witnesses in France. In this way was the humane duke of Savoy influenced to send an armed force into the valleys, in order to reduce the inhabitants to the Romish obedience, or to exterminate them. But he saw his mistake, and we have no doubt was willing enough to conclude a peace, such as it was. The death of Cromwell, which took place in 1658, deprived the Waldenses of their sincerest friend and most powerful intercessor. He had sanctioned a collection for them, and contributed from his own purse two thousand pounds. The whole amount collected at that time was thirty-eight thousand pounds.

### **THE PEACE OF 1655**

The peace which followed the great massacre of 1655 lasted about **thirty years**; but history speaks of this period as rest only, when contrasted with the storms that preceded it. The Catholics still found many ways in which to annoy and oppress those whom they could neither conquer nor convert. The

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<sup>385</sup> *History of the Vaudois*, by Hugh Dyke Acland, p. 69.

condition of the Vaudois, after the treaty of peace was signed, is thus described by Sir Samuel Morland, the English ambassador: "To this very day, they labour under most heavy burdens, which are laid on their shoulders by those rigid task-masters of the church of Rome... Those very valleys which they inhabit are no other than a prison or dungeon, to which the fort of La Torre serves as a door. To all this I must add, that, notwithstanding those large supplies which have been sent them from England or foreign states, yet so great is the number of hungry creatures, and so grievous the oppressions of their popish enemies, who lie in wait to bereave them of whatsoever is given them, and snatch at every morsel of meat that goes into their mouths, that verily ever and anon they are ready to eat their own flesh for want of bread. The tongue of the suckling cleaves to the roof of its mouth, and the young children ask bread and no man gives it to them. The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets. Their miseries are more sore. and grievous than words can express — they are in a manner dying while they yet live. No grapes in their vineyards, no cattle in their fields, no herds in their stalls, no corn in their garners, no meal in their barrels, no oil in their cruse."<sup>386</sup>

### **THE PERSECUTION AND EXPULSION OF THE WALDENSES**

Thus the inhabitants of the valleys struggled on until the year 1686, when a fresh war broke out under the sovereignty of **Victor Amadeus II**, but chiefly through the influence of Louis XIV of France. When joined by the French auxiliaries, the united force amounted to between fifteen and twenty thousand men. Though vast numbers of the invaders were killed, the peasants were overpowered, and those who escaped the exterminating vengeance of the sword were dragged to prison, and the valleys were quite depopulated. We have no space for details but would just add, that treachery and atrocity, as usual, on the one side, and heroic devotedness on the other, marked the progress of the war; but treachery accomplished its end, and atrocities followed. "Fourteen thousand healthy mountaineers," says Henri Arnaud, "were thrust into the dungeons of Piedmont. But when, at the intercession of the Swiss deputies, their prisons were opened, three thousand skeletons only crawled out." Such were the tender mercies of Holy Mother Church; and such would be her tender mercies today, were her opportunities the same. At a distance of nearly two hundred years, the heart sickens, the imagination is oppressed, recoiling from the contemplation of such cold-blooded heartless cruelties. Eleven thousand perished in a few months from fetid air, cold, hunger, disease, inhumanity and utter neglect. What must have been the state of the atmosphere with such fearful mortality! But we cannot proceed further.

The prisons were thrown open in the beginning of October; but only on condition that the prisoners should immediately leave the country and embrace perpetual exile. Winter was already advancing in all its terrors, but no mercy could be shown to such heretics, and the famished band, the same

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<sup>386</sup> Acland, p. 71.

evening, was driven forth to the Alps. They commenced their dreary **march towards Mount Cenis**; darkness soon overtook them, and before sunrise, more than one hundred and fifty had perished on the road. But the most afflicting spectacle in this harrowing procession, was that of the poor mothers and their infants. They turned their backs to the storm, so as to protect the child in arms, but many of them dropped with fatigue, and were wrapped in the stern winding-sheet of the Alps. The distressed exiles earnestly entreated the officer in command to let them rest for a day, especially as the weather showed signs of an approaching hurricane. The officer, however, had no authority to grant their prayer, and the dreary march was resumed. “During the hurricane,” says Dr. Beattie, “the snow, resembling pounded ice, is tossed furiously around — like waves of sea-foam carried into the air — and deposited in overwhelming masses along the traveller’s path. In its effect the snow-storm of the Alps is like the sand-storm in the Great Desert, saturating the air with its particles, and when blowing in the face, produced blindness and blistering of the skin. Under such circumstances, every hour must have been marked by some distressing incident — some new disaster that rapidly diminished their number, and sickened their hearts.”<sup>387</sup>

### **THE ARRIVAL OF THE EXILES AT GENEVA**

About the middle of December the survivors of this wayworn band arrived at the **gates of Geneva**; but so exhausted, that several of them died between the outer and the inner gates of the city, “finding,” as one has said, “the end of their life at the beginning of their liberty.” Some could not speak from their tongues being swollen, and others could not hold out their hands to receive the kindness of their new friends, from their arms being frost-bitten. All, however, that humanity could suggest, all that a christian brotherhood could supply, was brought to their relief. But Geneva could not contain them all, and arrangements were made for distributing the exiles among the Reformed cantons. And the inhabitants of these cantons — to their praise be it recorded — vied with one another in offering them the most cordial sympathy, united with the most friendly ministries of brotherly love. But neither present comforts nor future prospects could make them forget their ancestral homes. As they wandered by the banks of the Rhine, they were like the Jews of old by the rivers of Babylon — they hung their harps upon the willows, and sat down and wept as they remembered their much loved valleys with all their tender recollections and cherished associations.

For the attainment of this grand object they made several attempts which proved unsuccessful. The enterprise being discovered, the senates of the different cantons in which the exiles resided, foreseeing that their departure might compromise them with the papal powers, took measures to prevent their embarkation. This was a great disappointment to the yearning heart of

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<sup>387</sup> For details and illustrations, see Dr. Beattie’s *Waldenses*. Wylie’s *History of Protestantism — Waldenses*.

the Vaudois, and though they returned to their different communes, and resumed their industrious occupations, they were secretly engaged in devising measures for renewing the enterprise under more favourable circumstances. In the meantime the duke of Savoy, being made acquainted with the intention of the exiles, caught the alarm, and kindling his signals along the frontier, placed everything in a warlike attitude. He also ordered two regiments of one thousand strong, commanded by officers of high birth and merit, to take possession of the roads, bridges, and passes. While yet deliberating on the best measure to be adopted in this painful dilemma, their pastor and captain **Henri Arnaud**, addressed them from the words in Luke 12 “Fear not, little flock,” etc., which greatly revived their spirits and their patriotism.

### THE EMBARKATION OF THE EXILES

At length, however, many circumstances combined to lead the Vaudois to believe that the hand of the Lord was opening the way for their return. Their place of appointed rendezvous was a large forest, in the Pays du Vaud, near the town of Neon, on the northern shore of the Lemane. When all was ready, their chief offered up prayer to God in the midst of his devoted followers, and committed the expedition to Him. They embarked between ten and eleven o'clock, August 16th, 1689, and crossed the lake by starlight. When all had arrived on the southern shore of the lake, they numbered between eight and nine hundred. M. Arnaud — a man spoken of in the highest terms for his piety, patriotism, courage, and skill in military tactics — divided the whole into three bodies — advance-guard, rear-guard, and center, according to the system of regular troops, which the Vaudois always pursued. Thus they commenced their march back to their native valleys, supposed by some historians to be one of the most wonderful exploits ever performed by any people. Besides the natural difficulties of the way, such as the height of the mountains, the depth of the snow, the treachery of the glaciers, and the heavy rain, the roads were covered, and the passes guarded by the duke's soldiers, aided by the French; so that every inch of the way was disputed, and they had to fight their way right through to the valleys.

The feelings which sprung up in their hearts, when their native mountains first burst upon their sight, will be more easily imagined than described. Some could, no doubt, individualize the very peaks under whose shadow they had spent their infancy and youth, with a thousand other tender recollections, and for the recovery of which they had exposed themselves these thirty-one days to every danger, hardship, and privation, which could afflict the body or depress the mind.

“But now with that blest landscape in their view  
No fears could daunt them, and no foes subdue.  
A voice still whispered in their ear — Advance!  
So heaven restores you your inheritance!  
Beneath your mountains, where the sun goes down

Your sires have bled, and martyrs won their crown  
But henceforth, at their hearths, and on their tombs,  
Peace shall preside — the olive branch shall bloom  
And they who now lay watch to shed their blood  
Shall own at last one cause — one brotherhood!”<sup>388</sup>

The **march of the Vaudois** from the borders of the Lake of Geneva to their native valleys, not only was signalised by incidents unsurpassed in the history of events, but was crowned with success. As the Lord would have it, a quarrel arose about this time between the king of France and Victor Amadeus, which induced the latter to take this heroic band into favour. “Hitherto,” said he, to the scattered remnant of his Piedmontese subjects, “we have been enemies; but from henceforth we must be friends; others are to blame more than myself for the evils you have suffered.” This happy turn in their affairs was followed by treaties between the English and the Piedmontese governments, in the reigns of **William III** and **queen Anne**. From that period to the present Great Britain has been empowered, by virtue of these solemn compacts, to interpose for their protection, and their churches ought to have had rest. But again and again, under false pretences, these oppressed people have had to contend against petty injuries and harassing grievances.<sup>389</sup>

During the French empire of **Napoleon**, when the iron crown of Italy was placed upon the head of “the Corsican,” the Waldenses enjoyed equal rights and privileges in common with the rest of their countrymen. But, at the restoration of the House of Savoy to the kingdom of Sardinia, they were replaced under their former disabilities. This was the effect of evil counsel, for the restored prince acknowledged, on more occasions than one, “the constant and distinguished proof which the Waldenses had ever given to his predecessors of attachment and fidelity. I know,” he added, “that I have faithful subjects in the Waldenses, and that they will never dishonour their character.” But evil counsellors prevailed, and the yoke was again placed upon their necks.

The chief difficulty with which the Waldenses have now to contend is poverty, which need excite no surprise. But the Protestants of England have not been inattentive to the condition of their brethren in the valleys of Piedmont. Public collections have on several occasions been made throughout the kingdom; and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts is the trustee of considerable funds raised on their behalf.

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<sup>388</sup> Dr. Beattie, p. 211.

<sup>389</sup> See a most interesting book entitled, *The Glorious Recovery by the Vaudois of their Native Valleys*, by Henry Arnaud, their Commander and Pastor, with a *Compendious History of that People* by Hugh Dyke Acland. The march lasted thirty-one days, and there the reader will find the particulars of each day. Our space forbids even a sketch of these interesting days.

Thus the Lord has watched over, preserved, and maintained a witness and a testimony for Himself in these valleys from time immemorial. And still the oil of His grace flows, and the lamp of His truth burns, while the thrones of their oppressors have been cast to the ground, and their dynasties extinguished for ever. Even the gates of Rome have been thrown open, so that we leave the Waldensian church, through the wonderful providence of God, in a wide and open field, for the exercise of their christian zeal and missionary labours.<sup>390</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> *Encycl. Brit.*, vol. 11, p. 543. *History of Protestantism*, vol. 2, p. 511. For details of the creeds, confessions, catechisms, etc. of the Waldenses, see Gilly's *First and Second Visits to the Valleys of Piedmont*.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 53

### THE REFORMATION IN THE BRITISH ISLES

#### IRELAND

Although we can scarcely speak of a **Reformation in Ireland**, we may briefly notice the changes in her ecclesiastical history. The connection of Ireland with the crown of England originated, as we have already seen,<sup>391</sup> in a compact with Henry II, Pope Adrian IV, and the Irish prelates of the day. “This treaty,” says Dr. Phelan, “would be memorable, if it had no other claim to the consideration of posterity than the hypocrisy, the injustice, and the mutual treachery of the parties; but their views and pretensions, descending regularly to their successors, and exerting a constant influence on Irish affairs, make it an object of nearer interest. Without attention to these, it is impossible either to unravel the history of Ireland, or to judge correctly of its state at the present crisis.” “The acquisition of a superiority by Henry over Ireland was greatly aided,” says Mosheim, “by a desire of the national hierarchy to attain that independent and prosperous condition, which was then common to all clerical communities closely connected with Rome.” Thus was the position of the bishops greatly improved, and their revenues increased, though at the high price of the independence of their nation.

In 1172 Henry completed his conquest of the country; the clergy submitted to the papal dictation, agreed to pay Peter’s pence to Rome, proclaimed Henry’s title to the sovereign dominion of Ireland, and took the oath of fidelity to himself and his successors. “Adrian’s sentence,” says a friend of Romanism, “violated the rights of nations, and the most sacred laws of men, under the special pretext of religion and Reformation. Ireland was blotted out from the map of nations, and consigned to the loss of freedom without a tribunal and without a crime.” The hierarch, however, did not regret the change. Hitherto, the native chieftains had exercised a power over the church, which tended to keep its clergy poor and subservient; so that they welcomed the sovereignty of England and the power of Rome as protection against the ravages of their lay-lords.

“Under the ancient system, an Irish prince was as absolute master of the priesthood as of any other class among his followers. But a new order of things was introduced by Henry II, and thenceforward kept regular pace with the advance of British and papal power. All the privileges of the English church, and all those vexatious pretensions, which had just attained a temporary triumph in the canonization of Thomas-a-Becket, were

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<sup>391</sup> See Chapter 27: “Christianity in Ireland”.

communicated to the Irish clergy and maintained by them with more pertinacity, in proportion to the weakness of the civil power.” From this period the Irish church came to be essentially Romish, the papal encroachments were tamely submitted to, and both the civil and spiritual rights of the Irish prelates were at the entire disposal of the Roman pontiff. Henry, in order to maintain his sovereignty over the Irish clergy, filled up the vacant sees mostly with Englishmen, and the consequence was, that a spirit of jealousy and bitter hostility began to be manifested between the English and the Irish ecclesiastics. Disputes arose; the English sovereign asserted his privilege in nominating whom he would; the Irish clergy, meanwhile appealed to Rome to decide the question, or rather, to confirm their nomination. The mitre usually prevailed over the crown, and the pope’s authority steadily increased.<sup>392</sup>

Thus the contest between the English sovereigns and the Irish clergy commenced; the latter sought to transfer their allegiance as churchmen from the sovereign of England to the pope of Rome, so that the struggle for supremacy lasted for centuries, even until the era of the Reformation.

### **HENRY VIII AND THE IRISH CHURCH**

When Henry had secured the cordial compliance of his English subjects with the principles of the Reformation, he resolved to obtain, if possible, a like reception for the new doctrines in Ireland also; but to his deep mortification, his proposal was treated with the greatest indifference and neglect. The advocates of the pope’s supremacy in opposition to the king’s were zealous and determined. George Cromer, a prelate of ability and learning — who, being primate of all Ireland, filled also, at one time, the high office of chancellor — headed the opposition to Henry’s proposed assumption of papal privileges, defeated his purpose for a time, and retarded the progress of what might be called the Reformation in Ireland.

The chief agent in forwarding the royal designs was George Brown, the first Protestant prelate that held a see in Ireland, having been appointed by Henry, archbishop of Dublin. His zeal for the doctrines of the Reformation in opposition to the dogmas of the Romish church, met with the most violent opposition from the bigoted Catholics, and his life was frequently in imminent danger from the zealots of that party. At the suggestion of Brown an Irish parliament was convened at Dublin in 1536, by which all opposition was silenced, and the national religion was formally changed, the Reformed faith being established as the recognized religion of the country. “Various statutes were enacted with the view of carrying out this great object. The king was declared supreme earthly head of the church in Ireland: he was invested with the first-fruits of bishoprics, and other secular promotions in the Irish church, as well as the first-fruits of abbeys, priories, colleges, and hospitals; all

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<sup>392</sup> For minute and most reliable details, see Dr. Phelan’s *History of the Policy of the Church of Rome in Ireland*.

appeals to Rome in spiritual causes were forbidden; the authority of the pope was solemnly renounced, and all who should dare to acknowledge it in Ireland were made subject to *praemunire* — a heavy penalty: all officers of every kind and degree were required to take the oath of supremacy, and the refusal to take it was pronounced, as in England, to be high treason. Thus was Protestantism declared to be the religion of Ireland by law established. The religious houses were suppressed, and their lands vested for ever in the crown.”<sup>393</sup>

The popish party in Ireland was very indignant at the assumption of such spiritual authority by the king of England. Numbers of the Irish chieftains avowed their readiness to take up arms in defence of the old religion. Special emissaries were secretly despatched to Rome to express the devotion of Cromer and his party to the holy father, and to implore his interposition in behalf of his spiritual authority in Ireland. Papal commissioners were immediately despatched to encourage those who were opposing the recent enactments, to rouse the chieftains of the north, and more particularly O’Neill, to rally round the sacred standard of their forefathers, and draw the sword in defence of the papal supremacy. O’Neill joyfully accepted the part assigned him by his papal majesty. A confederacy was formed for the suppression of heresy; an army was raised; O’Neill had himself proclaimed head of the northern Irish on the ancient hill of royalty, according to the custom of the native monarchs of Ireland. But this idle display and pomp was soon brought to an end. The deputy suspected a rising, and was prepared to meet it. The victory of Bellahoe, on the borders of Meath, broke the power of the northern chiefs: struck with an unaccountable panic, they all gave way and fled.

Several attempts were afterwards made to do battle in defence of the pope’s authority, but the prompt measures of the government frustrated every new scheme at insurrection, and the chieftains with their tumultuous bands were dispersed in all directions. These repeated defeats weakened the influence of the Ulster nobles, rendered the cause of the pope more hopeless, and led some of the most turbulent of the chiefs to profess reconciliation to the king’s government.

### **HENRY, KING OF IRELAND**

The act of supremacy, which was passed in 1537, was followed in 1542 by another to recognize the sovereign as *king* of Ireland, instead of *lord*. Hitherto the only title which the pope had allowed the sovereigns of England to assume was the subordinate one of lord; but this term was now changed by act of parliament into that of king. The alteration was commemorated by conferring peerages on several of the heads of the great families, thereby sinking the chieftain in the peer; and some of inferior note were created barons. Thus was

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<sup>393</sup> *Faiths of the World*, vol. 2, p. 153; Mosheim, vol. 3, p. 491.

peace restored to Ireland in so far as the great laymen were concerned, but the priesthood was not so easily won over to the cause of Reform.

After the death of Henry, and the accession of Edward VI to the throne, the lord-deputy of Ireland received a royal order to see that the Romish ritual was superseded by the new English liturgy. This fresh innovation roused the clergy to a bold and determined opposition. An assembly of the prelacy and inferior clergy was immediately convened; the new liturgy was treated with the utmost scorn; Dowdale, the primate, was as violent in his opposition to Edward's liturgy, as Cromer had been to Henry's supremacy. This opposition, however, was not allowed to prevail; by order of the government the English service was used in the cathedral of Christ Church, Dublin, on Easter Day, 1551.

A new revolution, occasioned by the early death of Edward, and the accession of Mary, added to this state of distraction and confusion. The religion of the country was again changed. Dowdale, who had withdrawn to the continent during the reign of Edward, was recalled to the primacy; the most violent of his opponents fled the country, and many of the clergy returned to their former faith. Liberty was given for the celebration of mass without penalty or compulsion; and the Roman Catholic faith was once more established in Ireland. The profession of Protestantism was made penal by an Irish parliament in 1556, and the sanguinary spirit of intolerance spoke of trampling down all opposition to the papacy by fire and sword; but happily the slow pace of colonial business long delayed the transmission of authority for commencing an active persecution. "At length, however," says Mosheim, "a commission for that purpose was prepared, and Dr. Cole, one of the commissioners, left London with it for Dublin. Exulting over the prospect of this crushing Irish Protestantism, he indiscreetly boasted of his charge before a woman at Chester, who was a staunch adherent of the Reformation and had a brother in the Irish metropolis. She managed to steal the commission, and to place in its room a pack of cards with the knave of clubs uppermost. Unsuspicious of his loss, the talkative messenger went on to Dublin, where he landed, October the 7th, 1558, and there looking for his credentials, was confounded by finding them so ridiculously supplanted... A new commission was, after some delay, obtained, but before it reached Dublin, Queen Mary was dead."<sup>394</sup>

On the accession of Elizabeth at her sister's death, the queen's well-known adherence to the cause of the Reformation, revived the hearts of Protestants throughout her dominions, gave a new impulse to Irish affairs, and set the whole country, lay and clerical, once more in motion. The whole ecclesiastical system of Mary was reversed; Protestantism was restored, and proclaimed to be henceforth the established religion of Ireland.

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<sup>394</sup> Mosheim, vol. 3, p. 496.

## IRISH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Having said thus much about the establishment of episcopacy in Ireland, we must briefly notice the origin of Presbyterianism in that country.

When Elizabeth ascended the throne, she found the whole island, from the restless ambition and jealousy of the chieftains, in a state of petty warfare. During the latter part of her reign, as well as the early part of the reign of her successor, James I, the northern provinces had been the scene of incessant conspiracies and insurrections. One rebellion after another kept the country in a state of commotion, fomented always by the popes of Rome, sometimes aided by Philip II of Spain, and Cardinal Richelieu of France. Bull after bull was issued, calling upon the princes, prelates, nobles, and people of Ireland to contend for the recovery of their liberty, and the defence of the holy church; and rather to lose their lives than take that wicked and pestilent oath of supremacy, whereby the sceptre of the Catholic church was wrested from the hand of the vicar of God. Such appeals, coming from the pope himself, could not fail to exert a powerful influence upon an ignorant and superstitious people.

Details of these long continued civil wars, the extinction of titles, and the confiscation of property, fall not within the limits of our "Short Papers;" but we may just add, that by the death of some of the leaders of the rebellion, and by the flight of others, nearly the whole of Ulster was forfeited to the crown, and fell into the hands of King James. This vast tract of land comprehended six northern counties, and spread over five hundred thousand acres. The king resolved to remodel the province by removing the ancient possessors, and introducing a colony of Scotch and English settlers in their stead. This led to the plantation of Ulster, the benefits of which are felt to this day. Industry, in a short time, changed the face of the country. The lands were cultivated and improved, a number of flourishing towns were established, and the province of Ulster became the most prosperous district in Ireland. But that evil spirit of popish hatred towards every aspect of Protestantism and England never ceased to plot, until it burst forth in the great rebellion and the revolting massacre of 1641. On the 23rd of October, the carnage began; on the 30th, the order for a general massacre was issued from the camp of Sir Phelim O'Neill, and, shortly after, the manifesto of the bishop MacMahon proclaimed the commencement of a WAR OF REBELLION.<sup>395</sup>

William, prince of Orange, after the battle of the Boyne, commenced his reign by assuring the Irish Protestants that he had come to Ireland to free them from popish tyranny, and he doubted not, by the divine assistance, that he would complete his design. The war was brought to a close, peace was restored, and the Presbyterian church, being reinstated in all its privileges,

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<sup>395</sup> Dr. Phelan's *History*, p. 332; *Faiths of the World*, vol. 2, p. 158. For lengthy and minute details see Froude's *History of Ireland*.

addressed itself to the great work of preaching the gospel and spreading the truth to the blessing of many precious souls.

## SCOTLAND

Having already noticed the religious condition of Scotland from the earliest times down to the dawn of the Reformation,<sup>396</sup> we may commence our present sketch with the *effects* of that great revolution on the people of that country; but we must retrace our steps for a moment, and renew our acquaintance with the existing state of things.

Before the Reformation, which commenced in Germany had found its way to the distant shores of Scotland, a spirit of religious Reform had begun to display itself in several districts, especially in the Lowlands. Many of the Lollards, or disciples of Wycliffe, who had fled from the persecution in England, found a refuge in Scotland and there remained. These, meeting with the descendants of the ancient Culdees may have quietly formed a little missionary band, maintained unbroken the chain of God's witnesses, and kept the lamp of His testimony burning in that benighted land. They denied the dogma of transubstantiation and the power of the priesthood; affirming, "That there is a universal priesthood, of which every man and woman who believes in the Saviour is a member; that the pope, who exalts himself above God, is against God; that it is not permissible to take up arms for the things of faith, and that priests may marry."

Among the protectors of these enlightened Christians — compared with many of the Reformers, especially as to universal priesthood and arms — was John Campbell, laird of Cessnock, a man well versed in the scriptures, but not equal to his wife, who could "set the dogmas of the priests face to face with the holy scriptures, and show their falsehood." "On the testimony of both friend and foe," says another historian, "there were few counties in the Lowlands of Scotland where these Lollards were not to be found. They were numerous in Fife; they were still more numerous in the districts of Cunningham and Kyle; hence their name, *The Lollards of Kyle*. In the reign of James IV about 1494, some thirty Lollards were summoned before the archiepiscopal tribunal of Glasgow on a charge of heresy. They were almost all gentlemen of landed property in the districts already named; and were charged with denying the mass, purgatory, the worshipping of images, the praying to saints, the pope's vicarship, his power to pardon sin — in short, all the peculiar doctrines of Romanism. Their defence appears to have been so spirited that the king, before whom they argued their cause, shielded them from the doom that the archbishop, Blackadder, would undoubtedly have pronounced upon them."<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>396</sup> See Chapter 14: "The First Preacher of Christianity in Scotland"; Chapter 27: "Christianity in Scotland".

<sup>397</sup> D'Aubigné's *Calvin*, vol. 6, p. 7; Wylie, vol. 3, p. 468.

The flames of martyrdom had not yet been kindled, we may say, and the spirit of burning had not yet taken full hold of the priesthood, or such heretics would not have escaped. But such witnesses plainly prove, what we have found in different countries, that the Spirit of God was working and preparing a people in all parts of Europe for the great revolution in the sixteenth century.

### **THE PROGRESS OF THE REFORMATION**

As early as the year 1526, the doctrines of the Reformation had made considerable progress in Scotland. Vessels from the continent were arriving at Aberdeen, Montrose, Dundee, and Leith, bringing fresh tidings of the progress of Protestantism, and secretly discharging packages of pamphlets and sermons of the Reformers. In this way the shores of the Firth of Forth were broad cast with the seeds of Lutheranism. When Tyndale had translated the New Testament into English, large numbers were imported from Flanders, and industriously circulated among the people. The Reformation on a divine basis now began. The darkness that had so long brooded over that country was being rolled away by the light of heaven. Almost every person had a New Testament in his hand, and God was using it in much blessing.

This was God's great mercy to Scotland, for the clergy had become so violent, that the living voice would have been instantly suppressed, though this too was needed for the great work, but the people must first be prepared by the teaching of the word of God. The Bible was Scotland's only missionary and Reformer at that moment. "With silent foot," says one, "it began to traverse the land; it came to the castle gates of the primate, yet he heard not its steps; it preached in cities, but its voice fell not on the ear of bishops; it passed along the highways and byways unobserved by the spy. To the churchman's eye all seemed calm... but in the stillness of the midnight hour, men welcomed this new instructor, and opened their hearts to its comforting and beneficent teaching. The Bible was emphatically the nation's one great teacher. It was stamping its own ineffaceable character upon the Scottish Reformation, and the place the Bible thus early made for itself in the people's affections, and the authority it acquired over their judgments, it was destined never to lose."<sup>398</sup> But however sacredly and firmly we believe this noble testimony of a most reliable witness, the living voice, the confessor and martyr, were all needed to arouse the nation from the deadly sleep of popery in which it had been so long and so fatally sunk.

### **FIRST MARTYRS OF THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION**

Few martyrdoms have had such a place in the human mind as Patrick Hamilton's. His youth, his accomplishments, his refinement, his learning, his blameless life, his noble and gentle spirit, all united to make him an object of universal pity. But he was guilty of Rome's unpardonable sin. On him was the

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<sup>398</sup> *History of Protestantism*, vol. 3, p. 169.

honour conferred by his divine Lord and Master, to be the first preacher of the glad tidings of salvation to his countrymen, and the first to seal his testimony with his blood. But more, the cruel death of this royal youth was made a great blessing to many, among both the learned and the common people.

He was the son of Sir Patrick Hamilton, of Kincavil, and the great-grandson, by both the father's and the mother's side, of James II He was born in the year 1504, and being designed for the church, the abbacy of Ferne was conferred upon him in his childhood according to a custom which prevailed at that time. He received his early education at St. Andrew's; and about the year 1517, he left Scotland, to pursue a course of study in the University of Paris, where he acquired his degree of Master of Arts. He may also have learnt something of the truth in the school of Lefevre and Farel. In 1523, he returned to his native country, and entered himself at St. Andrew's University. From the character of his conversation, and the free language which he used in speaking of the corruptions of the church, he drew down upon himself the suspicions of the clergy, and inquisition was made into his opinions. Under these circumstances he again left Scotland, and, attracted by the fame of Luther, repaired to Wittemberg. Having spent some time with Luther and Melancthon, he went to pursue his studies at the University of Marburg, then newly opened by the Landgrave of Hesse. There he had the advantage of the friendship and instructions of the learned and pious Francis Lambert of Avignon. The ex-Franciscan — whom we have met with before at Marburg — conceived a strong attachment to the young Scotsman, and had a powerful influence in moulding his character. But while he was daily advancing in the knowledge of the scriptures, he became increasingly desirous of imparting to his countrymen the knowledge of Christ and salvation, which he found to be so precious to himself. "This young man," said Lambert to Philip, "has come from the end of the world to your academy, in order to be fully established in God's truth. I have hardly ever met a man who expresses himself with so much spirituality and truth on the word of the Lord."

In 1527 he was in Scotland once more, and not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. He proceeded to the family mansion of Kincavil, near Linlithgow, and preached the gospel to his kinsfolk and neighbours. Many of the nobility and the common people seem to have embraced the new religion. He next resolved to carry the gospel to the church of St. Michael's, Linlithgow, termed by historians "the Versailles of Scotland." The palace was also a fortress and a prison; it was the pleasure house to which the court used to retire for relaxation, and within its walls the unfortunate Mary Stuart was born. Here the young evangelist brought the gospel within the hearing of the priests of St. Michael's and the members of the royal family. The simplicity and elegance of his style were fitted to win the hearts of his hearers, but the gospel he preached did not suit the priests. He maintained that there was no salvation for the guilty but through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for the chief of sinners; and that it is the anointing of the Holy Spirit that replenishes

the soul with grace, not the chrism of the church. He was denounced as a pestilent Lutheran to archbishop Beaton of St. Andrew's; and Beaton was too zealous a churchman to let Lutheranism escape with impunity.

Still there were difficulties in the way. He was not a heretic of low degree, but of royal lineage; and would no doubt be protected by the Hamilton family and other nobility, and perhaps by the king himself. What was to be done? Pretending to wish a free conference with him on some points of church Reform, the cruel and crafty archbishop decoyed him to St. Andrew's. Both Hamilton and his friends suspected treachery, but he thought it his duty to go. He had only been married to a lady of noble birth a few weeks, who, with others besought him with tears to keep out of Beaton's way; but he seemed to feel that the Lord might make his death of more service to his country than his life and labours, and so set out for St. Andrew's.

On his arrival he was received with every mark of consideration and respect, the archbishop smiling on the youth he had resolved to sacrifice. Knowing the difficulties which surrounded this case, Beaton required time to prepare the way for success, and so allowed Patrick something like liberty in the castle. Questions were freely discussed by the young Reformer with the doctors, students, and priests, as if he had been on equal terms with them; but Beaton was only biding his time, for the opposition was great and powerful. The court in which he was tried and condemned was surrounded by some thousands of armed men, which showed the fears of the priesthood. He was found infected with divers heresies of Martin Luther, condemned as a heretic, deprived of all dignities, orders, and benefices, and delivered over to the secular arm to be burnt alive. The priests decided that the sentence should be executed the same day, as his brother, Sir James, was not far distant with a military force, determined to rescue him. The condemnation had hardly been pronounced, when the executioners' servants were seen before the gates of St. Salvator's college, raising the pile on which the royal youth was to be burnt.

### **THE MARTYRDOM OF PATRICK HAMILTON**

At noon, on the last day of February, 1528, the noble confessor stood before the pile. He uncovered his head, and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, remained motionless for some time in prayer. He then turned to his friends, and handed to one of them his copy of the Gospels — the volume he so much loved. Next, calling his servant, he took off his gown, and gave it to him, with his coat and cap — “Take these garments; they can do me no service in the fire, and they may still be of use to thee. It is the last gift thou wilt receive from me, except the example of my death, the remembrance of which I pray thee to bear in mind. For albeit it be bitter to the flesh and fearful before man, yet is it the entrance to eternal life which none shall possess that deny Christ Jesus before this wicked generation.” As the executioners passed the iron chain round his body, and fastened him to the stake, he again exclaimed, “In the name of Jesus I give up my body to the fire, and commit my soul into the hands of the

Father.” By the ignorance and awkwardness of his executioners, his sufferings were protracted for nearly six hours. The details are too harrowing to be transferred to our pages. Three times the pile was kindled, and three times the fire went out because the wood was green. Gunpowder was then placed among the faggots, which, when it exploded, shot up a faggot in the martyr’s face, which wounded him severely. Turning to the deathsman, he mildly said, “Have you no dry wood?” Dry wood was brought from the castle, but it was six o’clock in the evening before his body was reduced to ashes; “but during these six hours,” says an eye-witness, “the martyr never gave one sign of impatience or anger, never called to heaven for vengeance on his persecutors: so great was his faith, so strong his confidence in God.” His last words that were heard were, “How long, O Lord, shall darkness cover this realm? How long wilt thou suffer this tyranny of man? Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”

So died the proto-martyr of the Lutheran Reformation. The rumour of his death ran speedily over the whole land, and all heard it with a shudder. People everywhere wanted to know the cause for which the young man had suffered such a cruel death. All turned to the side of the victim. It was, no doubt, around his funeral pile that the first decided movement of the Scottish Reformation took place. His gracious manners, and the mildness, patience, and fortitude which he displayed at the stake, combined to give unusual interest to his martyrdom, and were well fitted to touch the heart of the nation. “The murder of Hamilton,” says a modern historian, “was afterwards avenged in the death of the nephew and successor of his persecutor; and the flames in which he expired were, in the course of one generation, to enlighten all Scotland, and to consume with avenging fury, the Catholic superstition, the papal power, and the prelacy itself.”<sup>399</sup>

The overruling hand of the Lord is most distinctly seen in the whole history of Patrick Hamilton. So far as we are able to judge, a life, long and laborious, would not have served the cause of the Reformation so much as his trial, condemnation, and death, all accomplished in one day. Nothing less than the fiery stake of the confessor would have aroused the nation from that sleep of death into which popery had lulled it. It began to bear fruit immediately. Henry Forrest, a Benedictine in the monastery of Linlithgow, was brought to a knowledge of the truth by the preaching of Hamilton, and he is the first to come forward and repeat his martyrdom. It was told the archbishop that Forrest had said that “Hamilton was a martyr, and no heretic,” and that he had a New Testament. “He is as bad as Master Patrick,” said Beaton: “we must burn him.” James Lindsay, a wit, standing by, ventured to say, “My lord, let him be burned in a hollow; for the reek of Patrick Hamilton’s fire has infected everyone it blew upon.” The archbishop, not heeding the satire, had the stake of Forrest planted on the highest ground in the neighbourhood, that the population of Angus and Forfar might see the flames, and thus learn the

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<sup>399</sup> See Dr. McCrie’s *Life of Knox*, p. 14; d’Aubigné’s *Calvin*, vol. 6; *History of Protestantism*, vol. 3.

danger of falling into Protestantism. Henry Forrest was Scotland's second martyr.

### **MANY OF THE CLERGY AND NOBLES EMBRACE THE REFORMATION**

It is a remarkable feature of the Scottish Reformation that it began among the clergy, and was early embraced by the nobility and landed gentry. Almost all her first martyrs and confessors were monks or parish priests. Alesius, canon of St. Augustine at St. Andrew's, was brought to the knowledge of the truth, and confirmed in the faith of the gospel by the testimony which Hamilton had borne to the truth during his trial, and by the simple and heroic beauty of his death, which he had witnessed. The death of Hamilton being the subject of much conversation among the canons at that time, Alesius could not refrain from expressing what he now felt and believed. He spoke of the wretched state of the church, her destitution of men competent to teach her, and that she was kept from the knowledge of the holy scriptures. This was enough; the canons could not endure it. He was denounced to prior Hepburn, a base immoral man; he was treated with the most brutal violence, and thrown into a foul and unwholesome dungeon. When this was noised abroad, it excited great interest both among citizens and nobles. The king was appealed to; but the archbishop and the prior succeeded in detaining him in prison for about a year, when the canons, who were friendly to him, opened his prison door, and urged him to leave the country immediately, without saying a word to anybody. This he did, though most reluctantly, and found a refuge on the continent.

Alexander Seaton, a monk of the Dominican order, and confessor to the king, was also brought to see that salvation is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, without deeds of law. In 1532, having been appointed to preach in the cathedral of St. Andrew's in Lent, he resolved courageously to avow the heavenly doctrine which was making exiles and martyrs. "A living faith," he said, "which lays hold on the mercy of God in Christ, can alone obtain for the sinner the remission of sins. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, and no one is able by his works to satisfy divine justice. But for how many years has God's law, instead of being faithfully taught, been darkened by the tradition of men!" The people wondered at his doctrine, and why he did not speak about pilgrimages and meritorious works; and the priests were afraid to say much, as he was the king's confessor, and a great favourite. But Beaton was not the man to hesitate. "This bold preacher is evidently putting to his mouth the trumpet of Hamilton and Alesius. Proceedings must be taken against him." The archbishop succeeded in turning the king's mind against Seaton, so that he saved his life by taking flight, went to London where he became chaplain to the duke of Suffolk, and had the opportunity of preaching a full gospel to large congregations.

Many of the students of the college and noviciates of the abbey, under the teaching of Gawin Logie, principal of St. Leonard's college, and John

Winram, sub-prior of the abbey, were convinced of the truth for which Hamilton suffered, and embraced the doctrines of the Reformation. But the blessed results of Patrick's martyrdom were not confined to St. Andrew's. Everywhere persons were to be found who held that the young abbot of Ferne had died a martyr, being no heretic, and that they believed as he did. Alarmed at the progress of the new opinions, the clergy adopted the most rigorous measures for their extirpation. David Straiton, a Forfarshire gentleman, and Norman Gourlay, who had been a student at St. Andrew's and was in priest's orders, were tried at Edinburgh in Holyrood house, condemned, and taken to the rood of Greenside, and burned alive as heretics. About this time a change took place in the see of St. Andrew's, but not for the better. James Beaton died, and was succeeded by his nephew, David Beaton — a more cruel and bloodthirsty tyrant than his uncle — whom the pope made a cardinal for his zeal, and to increase his power.

### **THE FIERY ZEAL OF CARDINAL BEATON**

Strict inquisition was now made after heretics. The flames of persecution were kindled in all quarters of the country. From the year 1534, when Straiton and Gourlay were burned, till the year 1538, the spirit of persecution had greatly subsided, and the number of those who confessed Christ as their only Saviour and Lord, had greatly increased. This prosperity of the gospel was most irritating to the new cardinal, who resolved to suppress it by fire and sword. Dean Thomas Forrest, vicar of Dollar, Sir Duncan Simpson, a priest, Keillor and Beveridge, black friars, and Forrester, a notary, in Stirling, were immediately apprehended and tried for heresy before a council held by cardinal Beaton, and were condemned to the flames. A huge blazing pile was raised the same day on the Castle hill of Edinburgh, and there five faithful men were seen in the midst of it — serenely suffering, and rejoicing. To faith the fire had no terror, because death had no sting. Other names might be given, who soon followed the five martyrs on the Castle hill, and whose faith, confession, and sufferings deserve a more prominent place than can be given in our limited space; but their names are in the Lamb's book of life, their record is on high, and duly enrolled in the noble army of martyrs, and they will receive, on the morning of the first resurrection, that crown of life promised to all who are faithful unto death, with their Lord's eternal approving smile. In that day of His glory and theirs, all these sufferings will be completely forgotten, save as the remembrance of His grace which sustained them, and gave them the distinguished honour of suffering for His sake. Already they have been "with Christ," in the calm repose of paradise for three hundred years, but then, in their bodies of glory, fashioned like unto His own body of glory, what praise can they offer for the grace that honoured them with the crown of martyrdom? Heaven's estimate of Rome's heretics and their persecutions will then be made manifest; for all murderers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Rev. 21:8)

The fury of the clergy, now presided over by the tyrant David Beaton, daily waxed greater and greater; and numbers, to escape the stake, fled to England and the continent. Some of these were men illustrious for their genius and learning, of whom were John Macbee, John Fife, John Macdowal, John Macbray, James Harrison, Robert Richardson, and the celebrated George Buchanan, who was surely helped by the Lord to escape from prison, and saved his life by a speedy flight. He is well known as the author of the metrical version of the Psalms, as used in Scotland, and bound with their Bibles. A few, whose constancy was overcome by the terrors of the stake, professedly returned to the old religion, but the confessors of the truth rapidly increased. By the year 1540, many eminent men had received the evangelical doctrines. The earls of Errol and of Glencairn, Lord Ruthven, Lord Kelmain, Sir David Lindsay, Sir James Sandilands, Melville of Raith, and a large number of other influential persons, appeared to be attached to the gospel by genuine conviction.

### **CARDINAL BEATON'S PROSCRIPTION-ROLL**

The circumstances of the Scottish king, James V, about this period were peculiar and embarrassing. He was overwhelmed with sorrow at the loss of his only children, Arthur and James; he was in debt, and much in need of money; he had offended his uncle, Henry VIII of England, by refusing to make Scotland independent of Rome, as he had made England; he also urged him to confiscate the property of the church, and in this way fill his empty exchequer. But the influence of the hierarchy — Henry's deadly enemies — under whose power James had fallen, succeeded in producing a rupture between the uncle and the nephew, which led to war and the death of James.

Cardinal Beaton, on the other hand, proposed that the property of the heretic nobles should be confiscated for the king's benefit, and not the sacred revenues of the holy church. "He drew out a list," says Cunningham, "of three hundred and sixty persons of property who were suspected of heresy, and whose possessions, if confiscated, would amply supply all the requirements of royalty." Dr. McCrie, in his *Life of Knox*, referring to the same period, says, "Twice did the clergy attempt to cut off the Reformed party by a desperate blow. They presented to the king a list containing the names of some hundreds, possessed of property and wealth, whom they denounced as heretics; and endeavoured to procure his consent to their condemnation, by flattering him with the immense riches which would accrue to him from the forfeiture of their estates." d'Aubigné and Wylie speak of a list, "compiled by Beaton, containing over a hundred names, and among those marked for slaughter were Lord Hamilton, the first peer in the realm, the Earls of Cassillis and Glencairn, and the Earl Marischall."<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Cunningham's *Church History of Scotland*, vol. 1, p. 237; McCrie's *Life of Knox*, p. 17; d'Aubigné's *Calvin*, vol. 6, p. 168; Wylie's *Protestantism*, vol. 3, p. 479.

This last list may be one of the two spoken of by Dr. McCrie, and may have been revised and reduced to those who were intended for immediate slaughter as well as plunder. As the statements of the different historians vary, we have given all, but we have no doubt they are substantially correct. Here the reader may pause for a moment: can he take in the appalling thought? The alleged head of the church in Scotland, the chief shepherd of the flock of Christ — who should be ready to lay down his life for the brethren — a priest, in holy orders, coolly writes out a list containing the names of some hundreds of the nobles and gentry of the land, and endeavours to tempt the king to sanction their condemnation by flattering him with the wealth of their possessions. Was ever plot more deeply laid in hell, or more diabolical in its character? But it was not to supply the king with money that hell moved in this matter, but to cut off by violence all who were known to favour the Reformed opinions, quench the light of truth for ever in Scotland, maintain the authority of the clergy, and preserve inviolate those debasing corruptions from which they derived their wealth.

When this proposal was first made to the king, he is said to have driven the messengers from his presence with marks of strong displeasure. But so violent was the dislike which he at last conceived against his nobility especially after their meeting on Fala Muir, and so much had he fallen under the influence of the clergy, that but for the watchful hand of an over-ruling providence, it is highly probable he would have yielded to the latter, and executed the deed of blood. Instead however, of the nobility and gentry, it was the poor king himself whom the clergy brought to an early grave.

### **THE PERPLEXITY AND DEATH OF THE KING**

Henry VIII had been at great pains to bring about a personal interview with James; and had obtained a promise that he should meet him at York. Henry arrived according to appointment, and remained there during six days, but no James appeared. The priests, dreading Henry's influence with James on the subject of the Reformation, prevailed upon him to remain at home; which he did, but sent a courteous apology. But the haughty revengeful English king was not to be so easily pacified. He conceived himself slighted and insulted, and vented threatenings and curses against the Scotch. A border war was the result. The priests instigated James to go to war without summoning to his banner the proscribed nobles. Bishops, priests, and their partisans were to form the army; and when the king returned in triumph from the defeat of Henry, all those suspected of heresy should be seized and executed as a thank-offering for victory. But alas! when James was waiting in Lochmaben castle for the news of triumph, some of the fugitives arriving made known the total rout of his army on Solway Moss. His distress was unbounded. So great was his agony of mind, he could hardly breathe, and only muttered some vague cries. The high-spirited monarch could bear no more. He had been deceived by that despicable man in whom he trusted, which disturbed him as much as the victory of the English.

In this state of despair he shut himself up in Falkland palace, and the violence of his grief soon induced a slow fever. While rapidly sinking, intelligence was brought that his queen, who was at Linlithgow, had been delivered of a girl, afterwards Queen Mary. This was a fresh wound as he had no son; and feeling as if his family was extinct and his crown lost, he muttered an old saying, "It cam wi' a lass, and it will gang wi' a lass." Seven days afterwards the king died, on December 14th, 1542. When disrobing him, the dreadful proscription roll was found in his pocket. The nation then saw what a merciful providence had saved them from, and how narrow its escape had been from so fearful a catastrophe. The discovery helped not a little to increase the number of the Reformed, and to prepare the way for the downfall of a religion which was capable of conceiving such plans of cruelty and avarice.

The throne was now vacant, and "Cardinal Beaton lost no time in producing a document purporting to be the will of the deceased monarch, appointing him regent of the kingdom during the minority of the infant queen;" but it was generally believed to be forged, and the Earl of Arran was peaceably established in the regency by the nobles. Thus it was, by the gracious overruling hand of God, the man whose name was first on the list of nobles marked for slaughter, was now at the head of the government, and used by the same providence to place the Bible in every Scotchman's hand. The change produced in the political state of the kingdom by the death of James and the regency of Arran was favourable to the Reformation.

The earl having formerly professed faith in the Reformed doctrines, was now surrounded with counsellors of the same opinions. It is deeply interesting to observe that, at this early stage of the Scottish Reformation, the very flower of the nobility and gentry were on its side. Not that we think of them all as true Christians, but at that time the prospect of overturning the ancient religion was distant and uncertain, and they were taking a step which exposed their lives and fortunes to the most imminent hazard, so that we cannot attribute to them a lower motive than their personal convictions.

### **THE BIBLE RESTORED TO THE NATION**

In the month of March, 1543, an important step was taken by the parliament toward the Reformation of the church, by making it lawful for every subject in the realm to read the holy scriptures in his mother tongue. Lord Maxwell, who brought the matter before the lords of the articles, proposed that "It should be statute and ordained that it shall be lawful for all our sovereign lady's lieges to have the Holy Writ, to wit, the New Testament and Old, in the vulgar tongue, English or Scotch, of a good and true translation, and that they shall incur no crime for the having and reading the same." The bishops, as we may suppose, protested loudly against this measure, but it was passed notwithstanding, and instructions given to the Clerk of Register to have it duly proclaimed at the market-cross; and sent into all parts of the kingdom by

order of the regent. This public act in favour of religious liberty was a signal triumph of truth over error. The priests began to cry out with one voice: Heresy! heresy! and that the regent was the promoter of heresy.

“The victory,” says Knox, “which Jesus Christ then won over the enemies of the truth was of no little importance. The trumpet of the gospel gave at once a certain sound, from Wigton to Inverness, from south to north. No small comfort was given to the souls, to the families, who till then durst not read the Lord’s prayer or the ten commandments in English through fear of being accused of heresy. The Bible, which had long lain hidden in some out of the way corner, was now openly placed on the tables of pious and well-informed men. The New Testament was indeed already widely circulated, but many of those who possessed it had shown themselves unworthy of it, never having read ten sentences in it through fear of man. Now they brought it, and would chop their familiars on the cheek with it. The knowledge of God was wonderfully increased by the reading of the sacred writings and the Holy Spirit was given in great abundance to simple men.” This important act of the Scottish parliament was never repealed.<sup>401</sup>

Hitherto the Reformation had been advanced in Scotland by books imported from England and the Continent, but now the truth was disseminated, and the errors of popery were exposed by books which issued from the Scottish press. The poets and satirists were also busy. With the poet’s usual license, they employed themselves in writing ballads, plays, and satires, o, the ignorance and immoralities of the clergy, and the absurdities and superstitions of the popish religion. Such compositions in the Scottish language were recta with great avidity by the people, and operated powerfully in alienating the public mind from the Catholic religion.

### **GEORGE WISHART**

In the summer of 1544, shortly after Scotland had received the inestimable blessing of a free Bible, one of the most remarkable characters we meet with in ecclesiastical history appeared on the troubled scene. We refer to George Wishart. He was the son of Sir James Wishart of Pitarrow, an ancient and honourable family of the Mearns. He had fled from the persecuting spirit of the bishop of Brechin in 1538, and spent about six years on the continent and at Cambridge, as a learner and a teacher. When he returned, he is said to have excelled all his countrymen in learning, especially in his knowledge of the Greek tongue. As a preacher, his eloquence was most persuasive; his life irreproachable, he was courteous and affable in manners; his piety fervent; his zeal and courage in the cause of truth were tempered with uncommon meekness, modesty, patience, and charity.

He immediately commenced preaching the doctrines of the Reformation in Montrose and Dundee. But his reputation had gone before him, and great

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<sup>401</sup> D’Aubigné’s *Calvin*, vol. 6, p. 194; Cunningham, vol. 1, p. 242; McCrie, p. 20.

crowds gathered to hear him. Following the Swiss method, he expounded in a connected series of discourses the doctrine of salvation, according to the epistle to the Romans; and his knowledge of scripture, his eloquence, and his invectives against the falsehoods of popery, moved the populace so mightily, that in Dundee they attacked and destroyed the convents of the Franciscan and Dominican friars. So great was the excitement with the clamour of the priests and monks, and the tumultuous state of the people, that the magistrates had to interfere, and Wishart prudently retired to the western counties, where his friends were all-powerful. Lennox, Cassillis, and Glencairn were able to protect him, and secure him an entrance into every parish church. But Wishart, being essentially a man of peace, when any opposition was made to his preaching in the church, he refused to allow force to be used, and retired to the market cross or the fields. But it was a needless precaution to shut the church doors against Wishart, for no church could have contained the thousands that flocked to hear him. He preached at Barr, Galston, Manchline, and Ayr; but as the hired assassins of Beaton were constantly on the watch for his life, he was generally surrounded with armed men.

### **THE PLAGUE IN DUNDEE**

Not long after Wishart had been driven from Dundee, the plague entered the town. Hearing of this, with great devotedness, he hurried thither, was unwearied in preaching the gospel, visiting the sick, and seeking to prepare the dying for death. Those who were plague-stricken were kept outside the east gate, while the healthy were inside. To reach his audience on both sides, he mounted the gate — called the *Cowgate*, and, opening his Bible, read from Psalm. 107, “He sent his word and healed them.” The mercy of God in Christ, he assured them, was free to all, and whosoever turned to Him truly would receive the blessing — a blessing which the malice of men could neither eik nor pair, add to nor diminish. Some of his hearers assured him — they were so comforted by his sermon — that they were ready to depart, and counted it more happy to go to Jesus than to remain behind. The people were greatly troubled, lest “the mouth from which such sweetness flowed should be closed.” They seemed to have a presentiment that danger was near, and so it was.

A priest named Wigton, hired by cardinal Beaton to assassinate him, stood waiting at the foot of the steps by which Wishart must come down. A cloak thrown over him concealed the naked dagger which he held in his hand; but the keen eye of the evangelist, as he came down the steps noticed the priest with his hand kept carefully under his gown, and read murder in his face. “My friend,” said Wishart, “what would you do?” at the same moment grasping the priest’s hand, and snatching the weapon from him. The assassin fell at his feet and confessed his intention. “Deliver the traitor to us,” cried the people, and they rushed on him; but Wishart put his arms round the assassin,

and said, “Whosoever troubles him troubles me, for he has hurt me in nothing;” and thus saved the life of him who sought his.<sup>402</sup>

Through the Lord’s mercy the plague began to abate, a new life was soon felt in the stricken city; and Wishart exerted himself for the afflicted in organizing measures for the distribution of food and medicine. While thus employed, he received a message from the Earl of Cassillis to meet him and some other friends from the west at Edinburgh for the purpose of having a public disputation with the bishop. He obeyed the summons, although he knew that cardinal Beaton was bent upon his destruction, and that a cruel death awaited him. He arrived at Leith; but as that town is near Edinburgh, his friends entreated him to conceal himself for a day or two. This he could not endure. “What differ I from a dead man,” he said, “except that I eat and drink? To this time God has used my labours to the disclosing of darkness and now I lurk as a man that was ashamed, and durst not show himself before men.” “You know,” said his friends “the danger wherein you stand.” “Let my God,” he replied “provide for me as best pleases Him.”

Wishart began at once to preach in Leith; and afterwards proceeded to East Lothian, where he was entertained by the lairds of Brunston, Longniddry, and Ormiston. While here, he preached at Musselburgh, Inveresk, Tranent, and Haddington. On these occasions, he was surrounded by the armed retainers of his friends, and a sword was borne before him. It was here that John Knox — who was then a tutor in the family of Douglas of Longniddry — joined him. Previously to this, he had openly professed the evangelical doctrine, now he attached himself to Wishart, waited constantly on his person, and bore the sword before him. Wishart was highly pleased with the spirit and zeal of Knox, and seems to have presaged his future usefulness. After preaching at Haddington, he proceeded to Ormiston House, where he was to lodge. Knox insisted for liberty to accompany him, but the martyr dismissed him with this reply: “Nay, nay; return to your bairns” — meaning his pupils — “and God bless you. One is sufficient for a sacrifice.”<sup>403</sup>

### **THE APPREHENSION AND MARTYRDOM OF WISHART**

Meantime Beaton had come to Edinburgh; and, hearing that Wishart was in the neighbourhood, resolved upon his instant apprehension. At midnight, Ormiston House was surrounded by a troop of cavalry, under the command of the earl of Bothwell, who demanded Wishart. But neither promises nor threatenings could induce the laird to deliver up his guest. Bothwell assured him on his honour, that he would be perfectly safe with him, and that no power of the cardinal would be allowed to harm him. Ormiston was disposed to confide in this solemn promise, and told Wishart what had occurred. “Open the gates,” he replied, “the blessed will of my God be done.” But alas! Bothwell violated his pledge. and the victim of a faithless earl and a

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<sup>402</sup> See Knox’s *History of the Reformation*, folio ed, p. 49.

<sup>403</sup> McCrie, p. 21. Cunningham, vol. 1, p. 248.

bloodthirsty priest was hurried from Edinburgh to St. Andrew's, and thrown into prison.

The zeal of Arran in the cause of the Reformation by this time had greatly declined; and the cardinal, who had great influence over the mind of the weak and timid earl, was dominant in the nation. As it was contrary to the canon law for clergymen to meddle in matters of blood, Beaton asked the governor to appoint a lay judge, who might pronounce sentence of death upon Wishart, if found guilty of heresy. But Arran, irresolute as he was, refused to do this, and strongly urged delay. But Beaton was not a man to be hindered by canon law, or by the expostulations of the regent. Wishart was arraigned before a clerical tribunal, was found guilty of heresy, and condemned to the flames.

On the 1st of March, 1546, a scaffold was erected before the castle of St. Andrew's, and faggots of dried wood were piled around it. As the civil power refused to take part in the proceedings, the cardinal acted instead. His men were equipped with lances, swords, axes, and other warlike array; and the guns of the castle were brought to bear upon the spot, lest Wishart's many friends should attempt to rescue him. Meanwhile the balcony of the castle was adorned with silken draperies and velvet cushions, that Beaton and other prelates might enjoy at their ease the spectacle of the pile, and the tortures of the holy sufferer. When all was ready, two deathsmen brought Wishart from his prison. He was dressed in black; small bags of gunpowder were tied to various parts of his body; his hands were firmly tied behind him; a rope round his neck, and an iron chain round his waist to fasten him to the stake. He knelt down and prayed before the pile; then he exhorted the people to love the word of God, and suffer patiently and with a comfortable heart for the word's sake, which was their undoubted salvation and everlasting comfort. "For the true gospel," he added, "which was given to me by the grace of God, I suffer this day by men, not sorrowfully, but with a glad heart and mind. For this cause I was sent, that I should suffer this fire for Christ's sake. This grim fire I fear not; I know surely that I shall sup with my Saviour Christ this night, for whom I suffer." And many other beautiful words did he say — according to Knox, Buchanan, and others.

When bound to the stake, he said, "Saviour of the world, have mercy on me! Father of heaven, into Thy hands I commit my spirit." The fire was lighted. The cardinal Dunbar, and other prelates were on the balcony watching the progress of the fire, and the sufferings of the martyr. Wishart, catching sight of the cardinal and his courtiers, fixed his eyes on the cardinal, and said, "He who in such state, from that high place, feedeth his eyes with my torments, within a few days shall be hanged out at the same window, to be seen with as much ignominy as he now leaneth there with pride." The rope round his neck was now tightened, so that he spoke no more, and the fire reduced his body to ashes.

## THE DEATH OF CARDINAL BEATON

The death of Wishart produced a powerful impression all over Scotland, and excited feelings of the most diverse character. Churchmen extolled Beaton as the great champion of Rome, and the defender of the priesthood. Piety wept over the ashes of the martyr without a thought of revenge. But there were men of birth, without sharing Wishart's views who declared openly there must be life for life: the liberties of the subject were in danger when the tyrant could set aside the authority of the regent, and suppress the voice of the people. A conspiracy was formed against his life, and a small, but determined band — some of whom were instigated by resentment for private injuries; others were animated by a desire to revenge his cruelties, and deliver their country from his oppression — **broke into the cardinal's apartments** in the castle of St. Andrew's, beat down the barricades with which he had attempted to defend his bedroom door, and putting him instantly to death, hung out his naked and mangled body over the window, as Wishart had predicted. They then seized the castle, dismissed the household servants unharmed, and sent off a messenger to the English court to inform Henry of their success. It is well known that there was nothing for which the English monarch was more anxious than the death of Beaton. He had been the great obstacle to the accomplishment of Henry's favourite project — the uniting of the two crowns by a marriage between the infant queen and his son, Prince Edward. Some say the conspirators were in the pay of England.<sup>404</sup>

## THE RESULTS OF CARDINAL BEATON'S DEATH

The murder of the cardinal-primate was followed by results the most important. It removed from the head of affairs the most powerful and unscrupulous enemy of the Reformation, and the **greatest defender of Romanism** in Scotland. Like Wolsey, he was all but a king. His government was characterized by political intrigue, energy, and resolution; but his one main object was the persecution of the saints, the extinguishing of the Reformation, and the definitive triumph of Rome. But the work of God's Spirit needed not the assistance of the assassin. The christian life and martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart contributed far more powerfully to the advancement of the work of God in Scotland than the violent death of its enemy. The faith, the constancy, and the serenity of the martyrs, rose far above the ferocity of their persecutors, and through that instinct, which impels the human conscience to rise against injustice, and incline to the side of the oppressed, numbers were added to the ranks of the Reformed. One of the mistakes of the early Reformers, to which we have repeatedly referred, was their trusting to the protection of princes; but the Scotch Reformers had to learn through a long period of suffering that their strength lay in an arm mightier far than the kings of the earth, which alone

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<sup>404</sup> See *Encycl. Brit.*, vol. 19, p. 731. Cunningham, vol. 1, p. 251. Tytler's *History of Scotland*, vol. 4, p. 372.

could give victory to the weak and defenceless. Hence their great idea was *Christ as King*, and the motto on the banners of the Covenanters was, *Christ's Crown and Covenant*.

“The new life,” says d’Aubigné, “which sprang up in the sixteenth century, was everywhere the same, but nevertheless it bore a certain special character in each of the countries in which it appeared. At Wittemberg, it was to man that christian thought especially attached itself — to man fallen, but regenerated and justified by faith. At Geneva it was to God, to His sovereignty and His grace. In Scotland it was to Christ — Christ as Saviour through death, but above all as king, who governs and keeps His people, independently of human power.” While we think the Genevese historian very correct in his estimate of the character of the new life in the different countries, we must also add, that Christ is nowhere spoken of in scripture as the King of the church, but everywhere as the King of the Jews. He is spoken of as the Head of the church — of His body the church, and as Head over all things to the church. A king gives the idea of subjects, but as the church is One with Christ, — His body and His bride, He is never spoken of as her King. He is a King, of course and as such He will reign when “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.” There are three ways in which the glory of God will be revealed by Christ: 1. In grace, as when on earth and since then. 2. In government — this will be in the millennium, when the saints will reign with Christ a thousand years. 3. In glory — also connected with government — this will be for ever, “for all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Cor. 1:20; John 1:17; Rev. 20:6; 21: 1-8)

### JOHN KNOX

The vacant see of St. Andrew’s was soon filled by John Hamilton, abbot of Paisley, and brother to the regent. But although he did not equal his predecessor in vigour of mind, he equalled him in the unrelenting zeal with which he pursued all who favoured the Reformation; so that the persecution did not abate in the absence of Beaton. The conspirators who had seized and held the castle, welcomed within its walls all who were in danger of their lives from having embraced the new doctrines. They were soon joined by many adherents, both political and religious; and the place was garrisoned by a band of determined men, who bade defiance to the regent and his brother the archbishop. Among those to whom they opened their gates, the most noted was **John Knox**, the great advocate and supporter of the Reformation.

This remarkable man, whose name has long been a household word in Scotland, and whose future career was connected with so many great events, was now forty years old. He was born, according to the prevailing opinion, at the village of Giffard, near Haddington, in 1505. It seems his parents were in the middle rank of rural life, and wealthy enough to give him a learned education; and had probably destined their son for the church. From the

grammar school of his native town, he passed at the age of sixteen to the University of Glasgow, where the celebrated John Mair was then principal. It is said that he distinguished himself in philosophy and scholastic theology, and took priest's orders, previous to his having attained the regular canonical age. After leaving college, he passes out of view, and little is known of his history till we find him in the company of Wishart, immediately before his martyrdom.<sup>405</sup>

### **KNOX'S CALL TO THE MINISTRY**

The Reformer was no doubt warmly welcomed by the party inside the castle, and earnestly entreated to become one of their preachers. These solicitations he stedfastly resisted, "alleging that he could not run where God had not sent him." When he received a unanimous invitation from the whole congregation, and was solemnly pressed by Mr. Rough, a preacher, not to refuse God's call as he would avoid His heavy displeasure, Knox burst into tears, and withdrew himself to his chamber. He had now very different thoughts as to the importance of the ministerial office, from what he had entertained when invested with priest's orders. The charge of declaring "the whole counsel of God, keeping nothing back," however ungrateful it might be to his hearers, with all the consequences to which the **preachers of the Protestant doctrines** were then exposed, filled his mind with anxiety and fear. He evidently passed through much conflict of mind on this occasion, for though he possessed great strength of character, being naturally bold, upright, and independent, he was thoroughly honest, conscientious, and modest. But when he felt satisfied that he had the call of God to engage in His work, he resolved to undertake it with all its responsibilities, and say with the apostle, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24)

He commenced his labours as a preacher with his characteristic boldness, and was greatly blessed both to the garrison and to the inhabitants of the town. In his **first sermon** in the parish church of St. Andrew's, he undertook to prove that the pope of Rome was the man of sin, the Antichrist, the Babylonish harlot spoken of in scripture. He struck at the root of popery that they might destroy the whole system. During the few months that he preached at St. Andrew's, a great number of the inhabitants, besides the garrison in the castle, renounced popery, and made profession of the Protestant faith, by partaking of the Lord's supper after the Reformed mode in Scotland. But his useful labours were soon interrupted.

### **MARY OF GUISE AND THE FRENCH FLEET**

After the death of Beaton, the queen-dowager, Mary of Guise, sister to Henry, the cruel duke, who fought against the Huguenots and directed the massacre

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<sup>405</sup> McCrie's *Life of Knox*. Tytler's *History of Scotland*, vol. 4, p. 374.

on St. Bartholomew's Eve, was openly opposed to the Reformation, and like her family, was entirely devoted to France and Rome. Soon after the regent had completely failed to reduce the castle of St. Andrew's, a French fleet of sixteen armed galleys, commanded by Leo Strozzi, appeared in the bay. The vessels took up their line, so as at full tide completely to command the outworks towards the sea, while the forces of Arran besieged it by land. A breach was soon effected; and, within less than a week, a flag of truce was seen approaching. Thus fell the castle of St. Andrew's, and all in it including **Knox**, were put **on board the galleys** and conveyed to France. The terms of capitulation, it is said, were violated; and at the solicitations of the pope, the Scottish queen, and clergy, the principal gentlemen were incarcerated in Rouen, Cherbourg, Brest, and Mont St. Michel. Knox, with a few others, was confined on board the galleys, loaded with chains, and exposed to all the indignities with which papists were accustomed to treat those whom they regarded as heretics.

During their captivity, threatenings and violence were employed to induce the prisoners to change their religion, or at least to countenance the popish worship. But so great was their abhorrence of that system, that not a single person of the whole company, on land or water, could be induced in the smallest degree to join them. Mass was frequently said within their hearing, and on such occasions they were threatened with torture if they did not give the usual signs of reverence; but instead of complying, they covered their heads as soon as the service began. One day a fine painted image of the Virgin was brought into one of the galleys, and a Scottish prisoner — probably Knox — was desired to give it the kiss of adoration. He refused, saying, that such idols were accursed, and he would not touch it. "But you shall," replied one of the officers, at the same time forcing it towards his mouth. Upon this the prisoner seized the image, and throwing it into the water, said, "Let oor Ledie noo save herself sche is licht aneuche, let hir leirne to swyme." The officers with some difficulty saved their goddess from the waves; and the prisoners were not again troubled with such importunities.<sup>406</sup>

The Lord had no doubt important lessons to teach His beloved servant and his associates by their rigorous confinement. To escape the persecution of Hamilton, he was obliged to conceal himself, and to remove from place to place, to provide for his safety. Under these circumstances we need not be surprised that he took refuge in the castle. Nevertheless, it was like casting in his lot with the assassins of the cardinal, and with them he reaped the consequences. He was detained nineteen months a galley-slave in French waters. Not one of his associates suffered death!

By what means the prisoners obtained their liberty, historians are not agreed. Dr. McCrie very reasonably concludes, "That the French court having procured the consent of the parliament of Scotland to the marriage of Queen

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<sup>406</sup> Knox's *History*, folio, p. 83; McCrie, p. 34.

Mary to the Dauphin, and obtained possession of her person, felt no longer any inclination to avenge the quarrels of the Scottish clergy.”

### **KNOX REGAINS HIS LIBERTY**

Upon regaining his liberty, **Knox repaired to England**; emaciated in body, but vigorous and unshaken in mind. The reputation which he had gained by his preaching, and his late sufferings, recommended him to the English court, and he was chosen one of the chaplains to Edward VI. He was offered the living of All-hallows in London, which he refused as he did not agree with the English liturgy. The early death of Edward, and the accession of Mary compelled him to flee for his life. He travelled through France to Switzerland, and after visiting the most noted divines of the Helvetic church, he settled in Geneva.

The celebrated **John Calvin** was then in the zenith of his reputation and usefulness. Knox was affectionately received by him as a refugee from Scotland, and an intimate friendship was soon formed between them. The two great Reformers of that day were now together, nearly of the same age, very similar in their sentiments as to doctrine and the government of the church, and not unlike as to the more prominent features of their character. “Knox was a rough, unbending, impassioned, impetuous man, but full of humour: Calvin was calm, severe, often irritable, but never impassioned; rising in pure intellect above all his compeers, like Mont Blanc among the mountains, touching the very heavens, yet shrouded in eternal snows. There is no doubt but that Calvin exercised a great influence upon the mind of his fellow-Reformer. Knox was but beginning his work; Calvin’s work was done; Knox was but rising into fame; Calvin was giving laws to a large section of Christendom.”<sup>407</sup>

But no friendships, no prospect of personal safety, no sphere of usefulness, could banish from his mind the thoughts of his persecuted countrymen. He was constantly writing letters to encourage, and papers to strengthen them, in the truth of God; and he was no doubt well supplied with information as to all that was going on.

### **KNOX RETURNS TO SCOTLAND**

In the year 1555, after an absence of eight years, Knox again visited his native land. He was entertained by James Syme, a respectable burgher of Edinburgh, in whose house the friends of the Reformation assembled to talk over their prospects and plans. Up till this time many of the warm friends of Reform had attended mass, and were not outwardly separate from the communion of the Romish church; but the earnest uncompromising discourses of Knox convinced them of their error, and decided them to participate no longer in the Romish worship. Soon after this the Lord’s supper was celebrated

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<sup>407</sup> Cunningham, vol. 1, p. 308.

according to the Protestant form; and in this united act the foundations were laid of the coming Reformed Church of Scotland.

Among the nobles who now gathered round the Protestant standard, were Lord Lorne, Lord Erskine, Lord James Stewart, the Earl of Marischall, the Earl of Glencairn, John Erskine of Dun, and William Maitland of Lithington. These were diligent in attending the sermons of Knox, and helping him in his work. With such a body-guard the Reformer became free and indefatigable in preaching, not only in the capital, but in the provinces. In the winter of 1555-6 he preached in Kyle, Cunningham, Angusshire, and other places, imparting with God's blessing, new life to the Reform movement, and powerfully consolidating the good work in many souls. Rumours of all this work flew through the country, the clergy were alarmed, his apprehension was determined upon, and Knox perceiving that his continued presence in the country would draw down a fresh storm of persecution on the infant community, prudently withdrew to Geneva.

### **THE FIRST COVENANT**

From this period the **progress of the Reformation** in many parts of Scotland was rapid and decisive. The brief visit of the Reformer proved to be of immense service to the cause of Reform. Nobles, barons, burgesses, and peasants, separated from the communion of Rome, and assembled for the reading of the word and prayer. According to the Presbyterian form, they could not have the sacraments administered without a duly ordained minister; but these small meetings paved the way for the more complete organization. The next step of the nobles was the framing of what is known in church history as the **First Covenant**, and the framers are called the "lords of the congregation." In this covenant they promised before "the majesty of God and His congregation, to apply their whole power, substance, and their very lives, to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed word of God and his congregation," etc., etc. This third day of December, 1557. God called to witness — Earls of Argyle, Glencairn, Morton, Lord of Lorne, Erskine of Dun.

These measures alarmed the clergy. They saw that their downfall was near, unless strong and decided means were taken to prevent it. But they had only one weapon — the flames of martyrdom; and these were speedily kindled. **Walter Mill**, a godly old man, was accused of heresy, and burnt alive at St. Andrew's, August 28th, 1558. As he stood at the stake, he addressed the people in these words: "As for me, I am fourscore and two years old, and could not live long by course of nature; but a hundred better shall rise out of the ashes of my bones. I trust in God that I shall be the last that shall suffer death in Scotland for this cause." He had been a parish priest near Montrose, but suffered as a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The clergy were at their wits' end. Martyrdoms only increased the number of Protestants. The people were rapidly leaving the mass, and openly uniting with the Reformers. It was now perfectly clear, that unless the papists could strike a decisive blow, they must surrender. The friars appealed to the bishops, and the bishops to the civil power. The queen dowager, the bigoted catholic of the House of Lorraine, now openly avowed herself on the side of Romanism. Hitherto she had been playing a part between the bishops and the lords of the congregation. Now she issued a proclamation prohibiting all persons from preaching or dispensing the sacraments without authority from the bishops. The Reformed preachers disobeyed the proclamation. They were summoned to appear before her at Stirling, and answer to a charge of heresy and rebellion. The Lords of the congregation interfered, and the queen, amazed at their firmness, agreed to delay the prosecution until she had examined the affair more seriously.

### **KNOX'S FINAL RETURN TO SCOTLAND**

In the midst of these stirring and threatening times a powerful leader was wanted. A deputation was sent to Geneva, to entreat **Knox to return**; and on May 2nd, 1559, he arrived at Leith. The news of his arrival fell like a thunderbolt on the papal party. A royal proclamation was immediately issued, declaring Knox a rebel and an outlaw. But these proclamations were now little heeded. Chancing to pass through Perth soon after, he preached one of his vehement sermons against the idolatry of the mass, and the worship of images. The people were ripe for such a discourse, and greatly moved by it, but quietly dispersed when it was over. A priest, remaining behind, to show his contempt for the doctrine which had just been delivered, uncovered a rich altar-piece, decorated with images, began to say mass. A boy standing near, shouted, "Idolatry!" The priest in anger struck the boy, and he retaliated by throwing a stone, which, missing the priest, broke one of the images. A few idle persons who were loitering in the church, sympathized with the boy, and in the course of a few moments, the altar, images, crucifixes, and all the church ornaments were torn down and trampled under foot. The noise soon collected a mob; the excitement became great, and some one shouted, "To the monasteries," and in a short time the monasteries of the Black and Grey Friars were in ruins. The excited mob next bent their way to the abbey of the Charterhouse; and soon nothing was left of that magnificent structure but the bare walls. The magistrates of the town and the preachers hastened to the scene of the riot as soon as they heard of it, but neither the persuasion of the one nor the authority of the other could calm the tempest.<sup>408</sup>

### **POPULAR TUMULTS**

The **work of demolition**, which was begun in a frenzy of popular rage at Perth, rapidly extended to St. Andrew's, Cupar, and other places in Fife; and

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<sup>408</sup> McCrie, p. 127. Wylie, vol. 3, p. 491.

to Scone, Cambaskenneth, Linlithgow, Stirling, Edinburgh etc., etc. It was upon the monasteries, chiefly, that the violence of the popular hatred expended itself. They were in evil repute among the people, as nests of idleness, gluttony, and wickedness. Tradition has ascribed to Knox the party-cry — “Pull down the nests, and the rooks will flee away.” And in a single day, those nests of impurity and hypocrisy, which had stood for ages, were ravaged and swept away.

The queen, violently incensed at these outrages, vowed that she would raze the city of Perth to the ground, and sow its foundations with salt, in sign of perpetual desolation. She collected an army of considerable force, and appeared in its neighbourhood in a few days. The citizens shut the gates, and sent letters to the queen regent, the nobility, and “to the generation of Anti-Christ, the pestilent prelates, and their shavelings within Scotland.” These letters proved that the lords of the congregation were prepared to meet her. Seeing the determination and force of the people, she was artful enough to come to terms of peace, and accomplish what she could by dissimulation.

A war of religion now began. It is always distressing, and deeply to be deplored, to see Reformers taking up the carnal weapons of the world in their defence, and for the moment laying aside the sword of the Spirit. But the cry to arms by the queen led the Reformers to utter the same cry in self-defense; and in that age they thought that it was as lawful to follow the example of Joshua and David as of Peter and Paul. But the Lord in mercy interposed and removed the queen dowager by death. This took place in the castle of Edinburgh on the 10th of June 1560. Her decease was the **death-blow to French influence** in Scottish affairs, and happily resulted in the emancipation of the nation from a foreign yoke. The way was now fully open for the establishment of the Reformation. The nation, through the wonderful preaching of Knox during the previous fifteen months was ready to throw off the papal yoke, and abolish its jurisdiction in the land.

### **THE PAPACY ABOLISHED BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT**

Parliament was convened early in the month of August 1560, and the voice of the three estates assembled, was to determine the question of religion. All men looked forward to this convention as one of the most important that had ever been held since Scotland became a nation. We can only give the results. The estates of the realm authoritatively decreed the suppression of the Roman hierarchy, and the establishment of the Protestant faith. A short confession, or summary, of christian doctrine, had been drawn up by Knox and his associates, which was read in audience of the whole parliament, and by the estates thereof ratified and approved, “as wholesome and sound doctrine, grounded on the infallible word of God.” The great victory was won. The enthusiasm of the assembly was at the highest, and the venerable Lord Lindsay rose and declared that he could say with Simeon of old, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,... for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.”

Immediately after the ground had been cleared for the erection of a new ecclesiastical edifice, Knox was ready with the plan of the Reformed church in what is known as “**The First Book of Discipline.**” The constitution of the church, as set forth in this symbolic book, is strictly Presbyterian. It recognizes four classes of ordinary and permanent office bearers — the minister, the doctor, the elder, and the deacon. 1. Ministers, who preach to the congregation. 2. Doctors who expound scripture to students in seminaries and universities. 3. Elders, who are associated with the ministers in ruling the congregation. 4. Deacons, who manage money matters, and care for the poor. Then there are four courts — the Kirk-session, the Presbytery, the Provincial Synod, and the General Assembly.

The success of the Reform movement was now decided. Parliament had declared Protestantism to be the national faith, and Knox was ready with the fashion of the new church, and the creed of its members. But he entirely overlooks — like all the other Reformers — the doctrine of the church of God, as taught by our Lord and His apostles, and frames a constitution according to human wisdom, though he no doubt thought it was in accordance with the word of God. The consequences of this mistake, as we have already seen, are set forth in the Lord’s address to the church in Sardis. But we cannot speak too highly of those thirty-four years of faithful testimony to the truth at an immense expense of suffering and blood. And the Lord greatly blessed the preaching of the gospel. Nearly the whole national mind was gained over to the new teaching during that period, and the altars and the idols of superstition were destroyed throughout the land amidst the acclamations of the people.<sup>409</sup>

From this time, down to the **Revolution in 1688**, the Presbyterians were greatly oppressed and persecuted by the faithless and deceitful Stuarts, who wished to establish Episcopacy instead of Presbytery in Scotland. But the history of these stirring times falls not within our plan.

We must now briefly glance at the effects of the Reformation in England.

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<sup>409</sup> For many interesting details of this period, see Dr. Lorimer’s *History of the Scottish Reformation*; Spottiswood’s *History*, 3 vols.; Wylie’s *Protestantism*; McCrie’s *Life of Knox*; Knox’s *Original History*.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 54

### ENGLAND

From the times of Wycliffe, the great English Reformer, the Lord preserved a remnant in England, who witnessed for the truth, and who testified against the doctrines and superstitions of Rome. We found many of the descendants of the Lollards, or followers of Wycliffe, in the western districts of Scotland, who were prepared to receive the new doctrines of the continental divines. So it was in England. There were many, very many, among the humbler classes, who still held to the doctrines taught by their great chief; but they were compelled to hide themselves among the humbler ranks of the people, and to hold their meetings in secret. "They lived unknown, till persecution dragged them into the light, and chased them up to heaven." The least whisper of dissent from Holy Mother Church was visited with the severest penalties. As an instance of this, six men and a woman were brought to the **stake at Coventry**, in the year 1519, for teaching their children the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments, and the apostles' creed in the vulgar tongue.

Such were the scenes of daily occurrence in England, shortly before the Reformation. The priests were, as the apostle says, like "grievous wolves, not sparing the flock." **Richard Hun**, an honest tradesman in London, though still in the Romish communion, was a diligent student of his Bible, and a truly pious man. At the death of one of his children, the priest required of him an exorbitant fee, which Hun refused to pay, and for which he was summoned before the legate's court. Animated by that public spirit which characterizes his countrymen, he felt indignant that an Englishman should be cited before a foreign tribunal, and lodged an accusation against the priest under the act of *Praemunire*. Such boldness — most extraordinary at that time — exasperated the clergy beyond all bounds. "Such boldness," they said, "must be severely checked, or every layman will dare to resist the priest." Hun was accused of heresy, and thrown into the Lollards' tower of St. Paul's, and left there with an iron collar round his neck, attached to which was a heavy chain which he could scarcely drag across his prison floor.

When brought before his judges, no proof of heresy could be brought against him, and it was observed with astonishment "that he had his beads in prison with him." His persecutors were now in a great dilemma. To set him at liberty would proclaim their own defeat; and who could stop the Reformers, if the priests were to be so easily resisted? Three of their agents undertook to extricate the holy fathers from their difficulties. At midnight those men, one of them the bell-ringer, conducted the others with a light to Hun's cell. They fell upon him, strangled him, and then, putting his own belt round his neck,

they suspended the lifeless body by an iron ring in the wall; and thus the turnkey found him in the morning. "The priests have murdered him," was the general cry in London, and demanded an inquest to be held on his body. Marks of violence being found on his person, and traces of blood in his cell, the jury concluded that he had been murdered; besides two of the three criminals were so conscience-stricken that they confessed their guilt. The priests were now in a greater dilemma than ever. What was to be done? This would be a serious blow to them unless they could somehow justify themselves. The house of Hun was searched, a Bible was found in it, and it was Wycliffe's translation. This was enough; He was condemned as a heretic; his body was dug up and burnt in Smithfield. But all this rather exposed than screened their guilt. The case was brought before parliament; Hun's character was vindicated; the priests were charged with the crime of murder, and restitution of his goods had to be made to his family. But through the influence of Wolsey the criminals were not punished.

### THE MARTYRDOM OF JOHN BROWN

Although the clergy had been unfortunate in the affair of Hun, and exposed themselves to shame and reproach, they were by no means discouraged in their cruel course of persecution. There were many sufferers and martyrs about this time, according to our English martyrologist.

In the spring of 1517 — the year in which Luther nailed his *theses* to the church door — **John Brown** of Ashford, an intelligent Christian, happened to seat himself beside a priest in the Gravesend passage-boat. "Dost thou know who I am?" said the priest, in the most haughty manner. "No, sir," said Brown. "Well then, you must know that I am a priest; you are too near me." "Indeed, sir! are you a parson, or vicar, or lady's chaplain?" "No; I am a *soul-priest*; I sing mass to save souls." "Do you, sir," rejoined Brown, "that is well done: and can you tell me where you find the soul when you begin the mass?" "I cannot," said the priest. "And where do you leave it, pray, when the mass is ended?" "I do not know," said the priest. "What!" continued Brown, "you do not know where you find the soul or where you leave it, and yet you say that you save it!" "Go thy ways," said the priest angrily; "thou art a heretic, and I will be even with thee."

As soon as the priest landed at Gravesend, he rode off to Canterbury, and denounced Brown to the archbishop. In three days after this conversation, as Brown sat at dinner with his family, the officers of Warham entered, dragged the man from his house, tied him on horseback, and rode off quickly. The heart-rending cries of his wife and children were of no avail. The primate's officers were too well acquainted with such tears and cries to be moved to pity. Brown was thrown into prison, and there he lay forty days, during which time his family knew not where he was, or what had been done to him. At the end of that time he was brought up for trial before the archbishop of Canterbury, and the bishop of Rochester. He was required to retract his

“blasphemy.” “Christ was once offered,” said Brown, “to bear the sins of many, and it is by this sacrifice we are saved, not by the repetitions of the priests.” At this reply the archbishop made a sign to the executioners, who immediately took off the shoes and stockings of the pious Christian, and placed his bare feet on a pan of burning coals. This heartless cruelty was in direct violation of the English laws which forbade torture to be inflicted on any subject of the crown, but the clergy thought themselves above the laws. “Confess the efficacy of the mass,” cried the two bishops to the sufferer. “If I deny my Lord upon earth,” he replied, “He will deny me before his Father in heaven.” The flesh was burnt off the soles of his feet even to the bones, and still John Brown remained firm and unshaken. The bishops feeling their utter weakness in the presence of divine strength, ordered him to be **burnt alive** — the last act of human cruelty.

The martyr was led back to Ashford. The servant of the family happening to be out when he arrived, saw him, and running back, rushed into the house, exclaiming, “I have seen him! I have seen him!” His poor wife hastened to see him, he was so tightly bound in the stocks, that he could hardly move even his head, in speaking to his wife. She sat down beside him: his features were changed by suffering; her tears and distress must remain for ever untold. He thanked the Lord for sustaining him under the torture, and for enabling him to confess his faith in the blessed Lord Jesus; and exhorted his good wife Elizabeth to continue as she had begun — to love the Lord, for He is good, and to bring up the children for Him.

The following morning, being Whitsunday, he was-taken out of the stocks and bound to the stake. His wife, his daughter Alice, and his other children, with some friends, gathered round the faggots to receive his farewell blessing. He sang a hymn while the flames were playing around him but feeling that the fire had nearly done its work, he breathed out the prayer of his Lord and Master; “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,” adding, “Thou hast redeemed me, O God of truth.” The martyr was now silent; but redoubled cries of anguish rent the air. His wife and daughter seemed as if they would lose their senses. The spectators moved with compassion, deeply sympathized with the distracted family, but scowled with indignation on the executioners. “Come,” said Chilton, a brutal officer, “let us cast the heretic’s children into the fire, lest they, too, should become heretics. So saying, he rushed towards Alice, but the maiden ran off, screaming with fright, and escaped the ruffian.”<sup>410</sup>

Such were the servants of the archbishop, and such the heart-rending scenes in England, down to the time of Luther and the reign of Henry VIII, to which we must now turn.

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<sup>410</sup> For details, see Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, vol. 2, folio ed. pp. 7-14.

## HENRY VIII

From the rival claims of York and Lancaster the succession to the English throne had been a matter of fierce contention for many years. The struggle of the opposing factions amongst the nobility, known in history by the term, “**The Wars of the Roses,**” broke out about the time when Gutenberg’s labours at the printing press began, and greatly hindered the peaceful triumph of the arts and literature. The country was deeply affected in all its interests by these civil wars. Commerce was reduced to its lowest state, ignorance covered the land, and true piety had scarcely any existence except amongst the despised and persecuted Lollards.<sup>411</sup>

Such was the condition of things when **Henry VIII** ascended the throne in 1509. Uniting in his person the claims of the rival houses of York and Lancaster, he received the devotion of both. Everything seemed to favour the young monarch, and give hope of a peaceful and popular reign. His father, Henry VII, had successfully founded the Tudor dynasty, left him with a people outwardly quiet, and an exchequer overflowing with what would now amount to ten or twelve millions of gold. He was young — about eighteen — said to be “majestic in port, eminently handsome, and rioting in health and spirits.” His manners were frank and open, and being most accomplished in all the manly exercises of the time, he became the idol of the nation. His marriage and coronation were followed by a constant succession of gaieties and amusements on the most expensive plan, which rapidly reduced the treasures accumulated by his parsimonious father.

Henry had also a taste for letters. He delighted in the society of scholars and lavished upon them his patronage. Having been destined by his father for the church, and educated accordingly, his naturally vigorous mind had been greatly improved by education, so that in mental accomplishments he far exceeded the princes of his age. The new study of revived classical literature had for some time been much cultivated in England. This was not the Reformation, but it exposed the ignorance of the clergy, and prepared the public mind for the approaching change. The priests were now as opposed to the scholars as to the heretics. They railed against the invention of printing, the manufacture of paper, and the introduction of such heathenish words as nominatives and adverbs: they were all of Satan, and sources of heresy — but, as the king favoured the most illustrious of the scholars, it was not so easy to have them murdered or burnt as poor Hun and Brown.

But of all the learned men now in England, the one they hated most was **Erasmus**. He could not endure — as we have already seen in the course of our history — the greed, the gluttony, and the ignorance of the monks. He had often levelled against them his keenest shafts, and his most pungent satire. He had also indulged in some of his witty sarcasms against the bishop of St.

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<sup>411</sup> *Universal History*, vol. 6, p. 27.

Asaph, and, though he was a favorite at court, he must be banished if he cannot be burnt. The bishops set to work accordingly. Erasmus, seeing their intentions, and true to his nature, left the country. This event was overruled by a gracious providence in the most blessed way. He went straight to Basle, and published his **Greek and Latin New Testament**. Copies were straightway despatched to London, Oxford, and Cambridge, where they were received with great enthusiasm. The priests had thought to maintain the darkness by driving away the master of letters, but his departure was the means of restoring to England the light of eternal truth — the pure gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before Luther had posted up his theses, the holy scriptures were circulated in England. Thus was the Reformation chiefly accomplished by the word of God. There the Person and glory of Christ are revealed as the Saviour of sinners; salvation through faith in His precious blood, and oneness with Him through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

“The Reformation in England,” says d’Aubigné, “perhaps to a greater extent than that of the continent, was **effected by the word of God**. Those great individualities we met with in Germany, Switzerland, and France — men like Luther, Zwingle, and Calvin — do not appear in England; but holy scripture is widely circulated. What brought light into the British Isles subsequently to the year 1517, and on a more extended scale after the year 1526, was the word — the invisible power — of the living God. The religion of the Anglo-Saxon race — a race called more than any other to circulate the oracles of God throughout the world — is particularly distinguished for its Biblical character.”<sup>412</sup>

### **THOMAS WOLSEY**

Just as everything seemed tending to the rapid advancement of the Reformation, a powerful priest, **Thomas Wolsey**, appeared on the scene, who, for a time, hindered its progress.

This remarkable man, according to tradition, was the son of a wealthy butcher in Ipswich, and born in the year 1471. He seems to have been designed for the church from an early age, and was trained at Magdalen College, Oxford. About the year 1500 he was appointed chaplain to Henry VII through the influence of Fox, bishop of Winchester. The diligence and capacity for business which he displayed soon attracted the attention of the old king, who rewarded him with the valuable deanery of Lincoln. He was equally successful in gaining the favour of the Son, Henry VIII. Although twenty years older than his new master, he adapted himself to his youth and all its tendencies. He was no ascetic, though a priest; and vice, it is said, never hung her head in his presence. He was so clever, accommodating, and unscrupulous, that he could be gay or grave, as best served the purpose of his ambition. He gradually gained such an influence over the mind of Henry, that he virtually became the

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<sup>412</sup> *History of the Reformation*, vol. 5, p. 199.

ruler of the realm. Wealth, honours, offices — civil and ecclesiastical — flowed in upon him rapidly. He was created bishop of Tournay, and raised to the sees of Lincoln and York in the year 1514, and the following year he received a cardinal's hat, with the office of lord chancellor.

His enormous wealth, gathered from so many sources both at home and abroad, enabled him to maintain his elevated position with more than **regal splendour**. “Whenever he appeared in public, two priests, the tallest and comeliest that could be found, carried before him huge silver crosses, one to mark his dignity as archbishop, the other as papal legate. Chamberlains, gentlemen, pages, sergeants, chaplains, choristers, clerks, cup-bearers, cooks, and other domestics — to the number of more than five hundred — among whom were nine or ten lords, and the stateliest yeomen of the country — filled his palace. He generally wore a dress of scarlet velvet and silk, with hat and gloves of the same color. His shoes were embroidered with gold and silver, inlaid with pearls and precious stones.” But with all this pomp and grandeur, his capacity for business was great, and seemed to enlarge with the elevation of his rank, and the increase of his offices. He patronized learning sympathized with the literary inclinations of Henry, while in matters of state, he was the most profound counsellor. in the English court, though too often swayed by his absorbing ambition.<sup>413</sup>

Thus it was permitted of the Lord, that the church of Rome, the mother of harlots, should be illustrated in the man who ruled in church and state, and was arrayed in all the worldly glory spoken of in Revelation 17. It was a kind of papacy in England: he only wanted the triple crown; and the English people were to witness the kind of glory the papacy ever valued, before it sank and disappeared from the land.

### **THE REFORMATION BEGUN**

The elevation of such a prince of Rome, who was now to take a share in domestic and foreign politics, even greater than that of Henry himself, could not be favourable to the Reformation. The priests, emboldened by this display of papal power, determined to make a stand against the scholars and the Reformers. But it was too late to effect much, though heresy was still severely punished. The eve of the Reformation had arrived. Men's minds were disturbed; the papacy had lost its traditional hold upon the conscience and affections of the people, and the New Testament which Erasmus had given to England was doing a greater work than all the teachers or doctors in the land. Names so dear to every Christian's heart, and so famous in English history, now come before us.

**Thomas Bilney**, a student at Trinity college, Cambridge, hearing some friends speak one day of the New Testament of Erasmus, made haste to procure a copy. It was strictly forbidden by the Catholics, but was sold

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<sup>413</sup> D'Aubigné, vol. 5, p. 184; Wylie, vol. 3, p. 355; *Universal History*, vol. 6, p. 32.

secretly. Bilney opened the book which he had been told was the source of all heresy — his eyes caught these words: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” He laid down his book, and meditated on the astonishing words. “What,” he exclaimed, “St. Paul the chief of sinners, and yet St. Paul is sure of being saved!” The Holy Spirit shed a divine light on the sacred page, revealed Christ and His salvation to his soul, so that he at once began to preach Christ to others. He was the blessed instrument in God’s hands in bringing many to the knowledge of Christ, among whom was the celebrated Hugh Latimer.

**William Tyndale**, from the valley of the Severn — who afterwards translated the Bible into English — was at this time a student at Oxford. He had the reputation of being an extremely virtuous young man of spotless character, and fond of sacred literature. He obtained the book which was then attracting so much attention, and God used it to the conversion of his soul. He began almost immediately to give public lectures on the gospel of Christ, and the way of salvation through faith in Him, but this being more than Oxford could yet bear, he left, and joined the dear evangelist Bilney at Cambridge.

**John Fryth**, from Sevenoaks, was distinguished among the students of King’s college for the quickness of his understanding, and the integrity of his life. He was brought to the knowledge of Christ by means of Tyndale; and these three young students, completely emancipated from the yoke of Rome by the word of God alone, were amongst the earliest preachers of the doctrines of the Reformation, and ultimately were honoured of God with the crown of martyrdom. It was especially laid on the heart of Tyndale to translate the holy scriptures into the English tongue; but finding no convenience for this blessed work in England, he retired to the continent, and, settling at Antwerp, he there published a translation of the New Testament about the year 1527.

### **THE WORKS OF LUTHER REACH ENGLAND**

At the very time when God’s Spirit was working so manifestly in the universities, the writings of Luther had entered the kingdom and were being widely circulated among the people. The noble stand which the monk had made at the Diet of Worms was much talked of, and awakened a deep interest in his writings. There was no small stir among the clergy; the bishops held a council to deliberate on what was to be done. The **bull of Leo against Luther** was sent to England; and Wolsey also issued a bull of his own against him. The bull of Leo which gave a description of Luther’s perverse opinions was nailed to the church door, while Wolsey’s was read aloud during high mass. The cardinal issued orders at the same time to the bishops to seize all heretical books, and books containing Martin Luther’s errors; and to give notice in all the churches, that any person having such books, and failing to deliver them up within fifteen days would incur the pain of excommunication.

But this was not all, the cardinal-legate, in great pomp, proceeded to St. Paul's and publicly burnt the arch-heretic's book.

The principal result of these proceedings, as some say, with the publication of Luther's alleged errors on the doors of the cathedrals and churches, was to advertise his works, awaken the slumbering interest of the English people, and prepare them for the more fearless profession of the doctrines of the Reformation. The bishops had taken counsel to arrest the progress of the gospel; but in this, as in many other cases, the efforts of adversaries only accelerated the speed of the great work, and the puny wrath of men was turned to the praise of the Lord.

### HENRY AND LUTHER

When the writings of Luther were commanding such general attention, the king stood forward as the champion of the church in the character of a polemic. Henry was at this time a bigoted enemy to the principles of the Reformation, and greatly incensed against Luther for treating with contempt his favorite author, **Thomas Aquinas**. But Luther, nothing daunted by his royal antagonist, and in no wise convinced by his royal logic, soon replied to him in his usual style, plainly showing that, in his defence of the great principles of the Reformation, he was no respecter of persons.<sup>414</sup>

### THE ROYAL MARRIAGES

It is not difficult to discern, at this moment, the overruling hand of a divine providence in the marvellous changes which were taking place, and how little man at his best estate is to be trusted. The same gallant Henry that showed so much zeal for the Roman See, and was rewarded with the titles, "Most Christian King; **Defender of the Faith**," etc., in a short time denies the pope's authority, renounces his supremacy, and withdraws his kingdom from the obedience of the pontifical jurisdiction. And the same double policy of the Catholics that turned the mind of Henry, caused the downfall of Wolsey. Rome lost both — Henry and Wolsey — and the Reformation, indirectly, greatly gained. But the events which led to these results have been so minutely related by all our historians, that we may fairly suppose the reader to be acquainted with them.

The quarrel between the king and the pope first arose on the subject of the royal marriages. Arthur, the eldest son of Henry VII, was married to **Catherine**, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, and died without issue six months afterwards. The shrewd money-loving father-in-law, that he might preserve the advantages of the Spanish alliance, and retain her dowry of *two hundred thousand ducats*, proposed her marriage with Henry, his second son, now Prince of Wales. Some of the bishops were opposed to the union, as contrary to the laws of God, others favoured it; but to settle the question, a

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<sup>414</sup> See Chapter 35: "The Reformation and Henry the Eighth".

bull was obtained from Julius II to sanction it, and the marriage took place soon after Henry's accession to the throne. For seventeen years no question appears to have arisen as to the validity of this union. Of five children — three sons and two daughters — only Mary survived the period of infancy.

One of the many reasons suggested for the king's doubts as to the lawfulness of his marriage was the loss of his children. He began to think that it was the judgment of God for marrying his brother's widow. But it is more generally believed that the origin of his doubts was the passion he had formed for **Anne Boleyn**. The great question of "the divorce" was first mooted about the year 1527, and it soon became the source of the most important results in both church and state, and to the nation at large. The pope was appealed to for a bull pronouncing the marriage of Henry and Catherine to be unlawful, and a dispensation for king Henry to marry again. The pope was now in a great perplexity. If he declared the marriage of the royal pair to be unlawful, he would thereby affirm to all Christendom that his *infallible* predecessor, Julius II, had made a mistake in declaring it to be lawful. Still, the artful pope, who was most anxious to oblige the king of England, would have had little difficulty in making that straight, but the armies of the powerful Charles — nephew to Catherine — were then in Italy, and he was indignant at the repudiation of his aunt.

This complication of interests led to the most shameful artifices and intrigues on the part of the papal court in which the double dealing of Wolsey — who had been promised the tiara by Charles if he threw difficulties in the way of the divorce — being discovered by the king, led to his disgrace and his ignominious end. For seven long years the pope, by his diplomatic strategy, kept the impetuous Henry waiting, which shows, on the other side, the immense hold which the word of a pope had upon the mind of an absolute monarch. Driven to extremities, Henry resolved to take the law into his own hands, and **entirely abolish the pope's power in England**. "In 1534 an act of parliament was passed, with very little opposition, which put an end to the papal authority, as well as to the various payments of whatever kind which had hitherto been made by the laity or clergy to the see of Rome."<sup>415</sup>

### THE PERSECUTION BEGINS

The king, very prudently, demanded and obtained the sanction of the higher clergy to the great changes he was introducing into the ecclesiastical constitution of England. The bishops were greatly embarrassed. "If we recognize the king as supreme head of the church in England," said they, "we overthrow the pope." But they were obliged to submit to all his enactments, or fall under his displeasure. To atone for their cowardly submission to Henry, and sacrificing the pope, they resolved on kindling afresh the fires of

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<sup>415</sup> Marsden's *Dict. of Churches*, p. 213; Miss Strickland's *Queens of England*, vol. 4., Fuller's *Church History of Britain*, vol. 2.; *Universal History*, vol. 6, chap. 4; Burnet's *History of the Reformation*, vol. 1, part 1.

persecution, which had been languishing during the latter years of Wolsey's reign. The evangelical preachers were becoming more numerous, Lutheranism was rapidly gaining ground, the leaders must be burnt.

“Your highness,” said the bishops to the king, “one time defended the church with your pen, when you were only a member of it; now that you are its supreme head, your majesty should crush its enemies, and so shall your merits exceed all praise.” Before giving Henry's reply to this insidious flattery, it is necessary to state that, although the alterations of the king had done much for the overthrow of the papal power in England, they had done nothing as yet for the deliverance of the persecuted Reformers. Henry had no intention at this time of proceeding further with the Reformation, though the steps which he had taken were overruled by God for the advancement of that great movement. The act which acknowledged the king's supremacy declared that, “they did not hereby intend to vary from Christ's church about the articles of the Catholic faith of Christendom, or in any other things, declared by the scriptures and the word of God to be necessary for their salvation.”

As Henry had now broken with the pope, and the fidelity of the clergy was not much to be trusted, he felt the necessity of uniting more closely with them; and as he greatly delighted in his title “Defender of the Faith,” he consented to hand over the disciples of the heretic Luther to the priests. Thus an agreement was made between **the king and the clergy** of the most infamous character that ever darkened the pages of history. The king gave them authority to imprison and burn the Reformers, provided they would assist him in resuming the power usurped by the pope. This was enough; the priests would agree to anything, swear to anything, if only authority were given them to burn the heretics. The bishops immediately began to hunt down the friends of the gospel — the holy men of God.

We regret being unable, from want of space, to give details of **the martyrs** of this period, but they are to be found in many histories,<sup>416</sup> and sure we are their record is on high; and if the reader is a believer in the gospel, which was then called heresy, he will meet them on the morning of the first resurrection. This is the sure and certain hope of all true believers. “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17) Nothing can be plainer than these words of eternal truth. The church, which is His body, is complete, the Lord Himself comes for her; she hears His voice, whether in the caverns of the grave or alive upon the earth, and ascends in her chariot of clouds; He meets her in the air, and conducts her to the house of many mansions — the home of love which He has prepared

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<sup>416</sup> See Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, vol. 2, folio ed.; Strype's *Memorials of the Reformation*; d'Aubigné's *Luther*, vol. 5; Calvin, vol. 4.

for the bride of His heart. Brightly, amidst the myriad hosts of heaven, will shine on that day, the noble army of martyrs. But all will be perfect, absolutely perfect, as Christ Himself is perfect, and the joy of one will be the common joy of all; for all will be like Christ, the perfect reflection of His glory.

The prisons, the stakes, the faggots, as well as the tedious sick chamber, will all be forgotten on that day, save to speak of the grace which enabled us in some measure to glorify Him. Neither will it be an indistinguishable mass, for we shall know each other, and the links which had been formed on earth by the Holy Ghost shall remain unbroken for ever. Such is the bright and blessed future for which we wait, we long, we pray; but we know He is too faithful to come before the right time. And this is the future of all who believe in Jesus — the feeblest as well as the strongest. All who come to Jesus now are received: He rejects none. His mournful complaint is, “Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life.”... “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 5:40; 6:37)

The names of Bilney, Byfield, Tewkesbury, Barnes, Bainham, Fryth, and many others, who suffered martyrdom about this time, have become familiar as the **first Reformers in England**. But it was difficult for any honest man to escape persecution at this period of our history. The Reformers suffered as heretics, and many of the papists as traitors. Those who refused to take the oath of supremacy were condemned as guilty of high treason. The aged Dr. Fisher, bishop of Rochester, nearly eighty, and Sr. Thomas More, late Lord Chancellor, styled the Erasmus of England, were condemned and executed in 1534, for refusing to acknowledge Henry as supreme head of the church. Neither age, service, learning, nor virtue were respected by the cruel and vindictive tyrant. Just about this time, when scaffolds, blocks, and stakes were rapidly multiplying in the land, one of queen Anne’s maids of honour attracted the attention, and excited the guilty passion of the king. But as there was no ground for pleading a divorce in the case of Anne Boleyn, he resolved to clear his way, as one has said, by the axe, to a new marriage with **Jane Seymour**. Pretending to suspect her fidelity, the monster threw her into the Tower. She was denied even the help of counsel on her trial, and found guilty by judges who were bound to bend before the tyranny of their master. The beautiful, and, as many say, the virtuous, Anne Boleyn, was beheaded on May 19th, 1536, and Henry and Jane Seymour were married on the day following.

### **THE SUPPRESSION OF MONASTERIES**

Henry had been excommunicated by the pope; his subjects absolved from their allegiance; Charles V might invade his kingdom, and avenge the cause of his royal aunt, Catherine: and should there be a popish rebellion, the whole fraternity of monks would flock to the standard of revolt. The king was no doubt moved, by such considerations and fears to make an end of the monasteries, and appropriate their wealth before the danger arose. His prime

minister, **Sir Thomas Cromwell**, a favourer of the Reformation, and an energetic man, was authorized by his master to appoint a commission to visit the abbeys, monasteries, nunneries, and universities of the kingdom, and report the condition of these foundations. The result was overwhelming. In place of obedience, poverty, and charity, which these religious houses were established to exemplify, they had raised themselves above the laws of the land, besides rolling in wealth, and, as to their practices, we leave them in the original histories. Bishop Burnet says, “I have seen an extract of a part of this report, concerning one hundred and forty-four houses, that contains abominations in it equal to any that were in Sodom.”<sup>417</sup>

The king and the parliament, on hearing the report of the commissioners, resolved on their suppression. The lesser and greater monasteries amounted in number to six hundred and forty-five, while their possessions were valued at one-fifty of the kingdom — “at least one-fifty of the soil of England was in the hands of the monks.” Besides the enormous wealth which fell to the crown, from the abolition of the religious houses, the king seized the rich shrine of Thomas a Becket at Canterbury, and his name as a saint was ordered to be erased from the calendar. The monks and nuns were turned adrift to shift for themselves, which caused great confusion and distress throughout the land. **Cranmer and Latimer** pleaded the part of the confiscated property should be devoted to the founding of hospitals for the sick and the poor, and institutions for the cultivation of learning; but the king and his courtiers had little to spare for such purposes. As Tyndale quaintly says, “The counsels were taken not of a pure heart and love of the truth, but to avenge themselves, and to eat the harlot’s flesh, and suck the marrow of her bones.”

### **THE SIX ARTICLES**

But, notwithstanding this apparent Reformation, Henry was a thorough Romanist at heart. He maintained the doctrines of Rome, while he abolished the authority of the Roman pontiff in his kingdom. Under the influence of Gardiner and Bonner, two bigoted papists, six articles were enacted by the king and his parliament, usually termed the “**Bloody statute.**” It condemned to death all who opposed the doctrine of transubstantiation, auricular confession, vows of chastity, and private masses; and all who supported the marriage of the clergy, and the giving of the cup to the laity. This creed was thoroughly Roman. Cranmer used all his influence, and even risked the king’s displeasure, to prevent its passing, but all in vain. The Romish party was still powerful, and the king’s temper became more violent than ever. Latimer, now bishop of Worcester, was thrown into prison, and hundreds soon followed him. The prisons of London were crowded with all sorts of persons suspected of heresy. Papists were hung for denying the supremacy, and men and women were burnt in great numbers for denying transubstantiation. Commissioners were appointed to carry out the act, and who could escape? If

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<sup>417</sup> *History of the Reformation*, part 1, book 3, p. 334.

a man was an honest papist, he denied the king's supremacy, and if he was an honest Protestant, he denied the real presence. The number that died by the hand of the executioner, during the reign of Henry VIII, could not be credited in our day. Some say **seventy-two thousand**.<sup>418</sup>

### **THE TRUE SOURCE OF THE REFORMATION**

There are writers, we know, who ascribe the Reformation in England to the enactments of the king; but we think this a great mistake. That mighty movement flowed from a purer source than the murderous heart of Henry. Besides, he was a Romanist to the end of his days; and bequeathed large sums to be spent in saying masses for the repose of his soul. The work throughout was evidently of God, and by means of evangelists and His own holy word.

We have already seen the learned men of England in possession of the New Testament in Greek and Latin; but the common people — unless they had Wycliffe's translation — must receive the knowledge of the truth through preachers — such as Bilney, Latimer, and others. **William Tyndale**, a man chosen of God, translated the Greek into English at Antwerp, and sent thousands of his New Testaments to England, concealed in vessels coming to our ports. Sometimes they were seized and burned, but many escaped detection, and were widely circulated. The whole Bible in the English of that day, translated by Tyndale, with the assistance of **Miles Coverdale**, appeared in 1535, dedicated to the king, being the first edition of the scriptures published by royal authority. Probably through the influence of Cranmer, Henry ordered the free sale of the Bible, and a copy in Latin and English to be provided for every parish church in the realm, and chained to a pillar or a desk in the choir, that any man might have access to it, and read it. "I rejoice," wrote Cranmer to Cromwell, "to see this day of Reformation now risen in England, since the light of God's word doth shine over it without a cloud."

England had now thrown off the tyranny of Rome, abolished the whole monastic system, and re-established the authority of scripture. Still, the Reformation made no great progress during the remainder of Henry's life. The fabric of Roman traditions had fallen, and the foundation of a new edifice was laid in restoring the Bible to the people; but much patience, toil, and suffering had to be endured before the building could be completed.

### **THE REIGN OF EDWARD VI**

On the death of Henry, in 1547, the English Reformation assumed an entirely different aspect. **Edward VI**, the child of Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour, was acknowledged king of England, January 28, 1547, when only nine years old. His coronation took place in February, when the friends of the gospel were released from prison, the statutes of the "six articles" were abolished;

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<sup>418</sup> Wylie's *History of Protestantism*, vol. 3, p. 401.

many returned from exile, and the ranks of the Reformers were greatly recruited. When the procession was about to move from the abbey of Westminster to the palace, three swords were brought to be carried before the newly crowned king, emblematic of his three kingdoms. Seeing this, the king observed, "There lacks yet one." On his nobles inquiring what it was, he answered, "The Bible;" adding, "that book is the sword of the Spirit, and is to be preferred before those. It ought in all right to govern us; without it we are nothing. He that rules without it is not to be called God's minister, or a king." The Bible was brought, and carried reverently in the procession.

The natural gifts of Edward, it is said, were such as to raise him far above the ordinary conditions of childhood. His father had wisely provided him with pious teachers, who were also friends of the gospel. Numerous letters written by the precocious prince in Latin and French, before he was ten years old, are still extant. **Catherine Parr**, the sixth wife of his father, said to be a lady of great virtue and intelligence, carefully watched over his training.

During the brief reign of Edward, every encouragement was given to the diffusion of the English Bible. Though his reign extended to little more than seven years, no fewer than eleven editions of the Bible, and six of the New Testament were published. Various improvements were also introduced in the mode of conducting divine service. Images were ordered to be removed from the churches, prayers were no longer to be offered for the dead, auricular confession and transubstantiation were declared to be unscriptural, the clergy were permitted to marry, and the service was ordered to be performed in English in place of Latin. Articles of religion were also agreed upon in convocation; they were forty-two in number. In the reign of Elizabeth, they were reduced to thirty-nine, which continue, as then revised, to be the standard of the English church. The liturgy was revised, and re-revised, chiefly by Cranmer and Ridley — after consulting Bucer and Martyr — known as the "**First and Second Book of Edward VI,**" and was duly ratified by the king and the parliament, and came into use in 1552. It was substantially the Book of Common Prayer now in use.

While these works of Reform were being carried on with great vigour, the pious King Edward died, in his sixteenth year, July 6th, 1553; and with his premature death a night of terrible darkness surrounded the Reformation in England. His last prayer was, "O my Lord God, bless my people, and save Thine inheritance; O Lord God, save Thy chosen people of England; O Lord God, defend this realm from popery, and maintain Thy true religion, that I and my people may praise Thy holy name, for Jesus Christ His sake." During this short reign, we may say, the Reformation was established, and Protestantism had assumed, in all essential points, the form in which we find it today. "When Henry VIII descended into the tomb in 1547, England was little better than a field of ruins; the colossal fragments of that ancient fabric, which the terrible blows of the king had shivered to pieces, lay all about; and before these obstructions could be removed — time-honoured maxims

exploded, inveterate prejudices rooted up, the dense ignorance of all classes dispelled — and the building of the new edifice begun, a generation, it would have been said, must pass away.”<sup>419</sup> Yet in six short years the work proceeded with such rapidity, that the ancient faith, which for a thousand years had stood firm and been held sacred, had passed away for ever.

## **THE REIGN OF MARY**

**The Princess Mary** ascended the throne in July, 1553. She inherited from her mother, Catherine of Arragon, a determined hatred of the Protestant religion, and a strong attachment to the Roman Catholic faith. Her first acts were to repeal the laws of her father and brother in favour of Reform and against the pope and popish worship. Gardiner and Bonner were released from the Tower, and the leaders of the Reformation — Cranmer, Hooper, Coverdale, Rogers, and others — were sent to occupy their vacant prisons. Meanwhile cardinal Pole arrived from Italy, with full powers from the pope to receive the kingdom of England into the Roman pale. Persecution commenced, and all men apprehended a terrible storm. “A thousand of the Reformers,” says Marsden “including five bishops, many noblemen, fifty dignitaries of the church, and others whose position in society might render them obnoxious, hurried their departure, and fled abroad — chiefly to Geneva, Basle, and Zurich, where the Reformed religion was now established.” The year 1555 has been termed the one of burning and blood.

**Rogers**, vicar of St. Sepulchre’s who had been the associate of Tyndale and Coverdale in the translation of the scriptures, was the first to suffer. As he was being led to Smithfield, he saw his wife in the crowd waiting to see him. She had an infant in her arms, and ten children around her. He could only bid them all farewell with a look of faith and love. A pardon was offered him when he reached the faggots if he would recant. “That which I have preached,” he said firmly “will I seal with my blood.” “Thou art a heretic,” said the sheriff. “That shall be known at the last day,” responded the martyr. The torch was applied, the flames rose around him, and with hands raised to heaven he bore with perfect calmness the torture until they dropped into the fire. So died John Rogers, the protomartyr of the Marian persecution.

**Hooper**, late bishop of Gloucester, was burnt alive in front of his own cathedral. It was a market day, and a crowd of not less than seven thousand had assembled to witness the last moments of one so greatly beloved. His enemies, fearing the power of his eloquence, forbade him to speak, and threatened if he did to cut out his tongue. But it is said that the meekness, the more than usual serenity of his countenance, and the courage with which he endured his prolonged and awful sufferings, bore nobler testimony to his cause than any words he could have uttered. He was much in prayer and probably the greater part of the seven thousand were in tears. “To say nothing

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<sup>419</sup> *History of Protestantism*, vol. 3, p. 418; *Faiths of the World*, vol. 1, p. 825; Marsden’s *Churches*, p.227.

of his piety,” says another historian “and the cause for which he suffered, he was a noble specimen of the true English character; a man of transparent honesty, of dauntless courage, of unshaken constancy, and of warm affections and a loving heart.” His last words were, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Within a few days after Hooper’s death, Saunders was burnt at Coventry, Dr. Taylor at Hadleigh, in Suffolk, Ferrar, bishop of St. David’s, at Carmarthen, Wales. All these were clergymen.

**Fires** were thus kindled in all parts of England in order to strike a wider terror into the hearts of the people, and deter them by these terrible examples from siding with the Reformers. But they had just the opposite effect. Men could easily contrast the mild treatment of the papists under the reign of Edward, and the cruelties practiced on innocent men under the reign of Mary. Barbarous as the nation then was, and educationally Catholic, it was shocked beyond measure with the severities of the court of Mary, especially when the council issued an order to the sheriffs of the different counties to exact a promise from the martyrs to make no speeches at the stake — otherwise to cut out their tongues. Thus were kindred and friends deprived of the last and sacred words of the dying. Even the most rigid papists pretended to be ashamed of these savage proceedings when they saw their effect upon the nation. Undying hatred of the church which encouraged such atrocities took the place of superstitious reverence. The hearts of the people by thousands and tens of thousands were moved by sympathy to take part with the oppressed. In the summer of this year of horrors, **Bradford**, prebendary of St. Paul’s, was burnt at Smithfield, together with an apprentice, a lad of nineteen; and many others whom we cannot name. But we must briefly notice three familiar and honoured names in the martyrology of England.

### **RIDLEY, LATIMER, AND CRANMER**

Having been examined by the queen’s commissioners at Oxford on the charge of heresy, they were condemned to be burnt as obstinate heretics. They were old, learned, and greatly esteemed as ministers of Christ; **Latimer** was eighty-four, and had been one of the most eloquent preachers in England. They were sent back to prison, where they were detained nearly twelve months, the sentence of death hanging over them. In October 1555, an order was issued for the execution of **Ridley** and Latimer. They were led to the city ditch, over against Balliol college. After spending a few moments in prayer, they were fastened to the stake. The torch was first applied to the faggots around Ridley. The dear old Latimer addressed his companion in words still fresh, after three centuries, as on the day on which they were uttered: “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.” They both leaned forward as if to embrace the flames — the chariot of fire that was to carry them to heaven — their happy souls soon departed to be for ever with the Lord. Quietly have they been reposing on that heart of eternal love these three

hundred years, and there they will rest until the morning of the first resurrection when the sleeping dust of God's redeemed shall be raised and their bodies fashioned like unto Christ's body of glory, "according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

**Cranmer** was still in prison. Having acted so prominent a part under two monarchs, Henry and Edward, and in both church and state, he must be made to drink the bitterest dregs of humiliation; besides he had voted for the divorce the unpardonable sin in Mary's eyes. He was visited by the most accomplished of the Romish party, and treated with courtesy. They professed a sincere desire to prolong his life for future service, and hinted that he might have a quiet sphere in the country. His gentle spirit, his age, his failing courage, caused him to give way, and he fell into a disgraceful dissimulation by the arts of his seducers, and signed the submission required of him. The Catholics gloated over the humiliation of their victim, and hoped thereby to inflict a deadly wound on the Reformation. But Mary and Cardinal Pole had no thought of pardoning him. Instructions were secretly sent down to Oxford to prepare for his execution. On the morning of the 21st of March, 1556, the venerable archbishop, meanly habited, was led in solemn procession to St. Mary's church. Meanwhile grace had wrought deeply in the heart of Cranmer. He was truly penitent, his soul was restored, and fully prepared to make a bold confession of his faith. He was placed on a raised platform in front of the pulpit; Dr. Cole preached a sermon, as usual on such occasions. "He," says Foxe, "that was late archbishop, metropolitan and primate of England, and the king's privy counsellor, being now in a bare and ragged gown, and ill-favouredly clothed, with an old and square cap, exposed to the contempt of all men, did admonish men, not only of his own calamity, but also of their state and fortune. More than twenty several times the tears did gush out abundantly dropping down marvellously from his fatherly face."

### **MARTYRDOM OF CRANMER**

Sermon being ended, Dr. Cole asked him to clear himself of all suspicion of heresy, by making a public confession. "I will do so," said Cranmer, "and that with a good will." He rose up, and addressed the vast concourse, declaring his abhorrence of the Romish doctrines, and expressing his stedfast adherence to the Protestant faith. "And now," he said, "I come to the great thing that is troubling my conscience, more than anything that I ever did or said in my whole life. And forasmuch, as **my hand offended**, writing contrary to my heart, my hand shall therefore first be punished; for, may I come to the fire, it shall be first burned." Hardly had he uttered the words, when the priests, filled with fury at hearing a confession contrary to what they expected, dragged him tumultuously to the stake. It was already set up on the spot where Latimer and Ridley had suffered. As soon as the flames approached him, holding his right hand in the hottest of the fire, he exclaimed, "That unworthy right hand!" and there he kept it till it was consumed, repeatedly exclaiming, "That unworthy right hand!" His constancy amazed his persecutors. He stood

in the midst of the flames unmoved as the stake to which he was bound. His last words were those familiar to so many martyrs, and first uttered by the noblest of all martyrs — “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And in a few moments, his happy soul, released from all its cares and troubles, joined his companions in the paradise of God. “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” (2 Cor. 5:8)

Within three years (from 1555 to 1558) according to the historians of the time, **two hundred and eighty-four martyrs suffered by fire**, while many perished in prison from hunger and ill-usage. “Over all England,” says one, “from the eastern counties to Wales on the west, and from the midland shires to the shores of the English Channel, blazed those baleful fires. Both sexes, and all ages and conditions, the boy of eight and the man of eighty, were dragged to the stake and burnt, sometimes singly, at other times in dozens. Just two days before the death of the queen, five martyrs were burnt in one fire at Canterbury.” The news of her death filled the country with rejoicings. It is said that bonfires were lighted, that the people setting tables in the street, and bringing forth bread and wine, “did eat, drink, and rejoice.” Thus was fulfilled the saying of the wise king, “When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth: and when the wicked perish, there is shouting. By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted: but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.” (Prov. 11:10, 11) The world, notwithstanding the native enmity of the heart, bears its testimony to consistent godliness, both in princes and people; and what a testimony against wickedness when the death of a wicked ruler is matter of national exultation! So it was on the death of Mary; there was the shout of joy throughout the whole land. And such was the joy of Rome on the death of Nero; and of France on the death of Robespierre. And such shall it be at last when God shall judge the harlot, and avenge the blood of His saints at her hand. Then heaven shall rejoice, and shout its loud Alleluia! Alleluia! (Rev. 18:20)

On the same day that Mary breathed her last — November 17th, 1558 — died **Cardinal Pole**, her guilty counsellor. The system of Jezebel, reared at the cost of so much blood, fell with these two, never to be restored. Mary’s zeal for Rome had been fired into fanaticism by her marriage with Philip II of Spain; and her three advisers — the bigoted Gardiner the brutal Bonner, and the sanguinary Pole — led her to believe that in burning her Protestant subjects she was doing the will of God. When mourning the cold-heartedness of Philip, who rarely came to see her, Pole assured her that the estrangement of her husband was God’s displeasure for her leniency towards the Amalekites: then a few more were sacrificed to bring over the gloomy bigot; but Philip cared not to come, which, with other things, in the great mercy of

God to this afflicted nation, hastened her to the grave in the forty-third year of her age, and in the sixth of her reign.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> For minute details of the persecutions, see Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*; Froude's *History of England*, Fuller's *Church History* Burnet's *History of the Reformation*; Wylie's *History of Protestantism*.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 55

### THE REIGN OF ELIZABETH

In 1558 the **princess Elizabeth**, daughter of Anne Boleyn, ascended the throne in the twenty-fifth year of her age. Her accession changed everything. The terrible gloom which the reign of the “bloody Mary” had spread over the land instantly passed away. Every steeple in town and country sent forth its merry peal, the prison doors were opened, and men whom Mary had left to be burnt were set at liberty. All the laws which had been passed in the reign of Mary for the restoration of popery were repealed, and the English service was again introduced. Her conduct in relation to the Reformation — the great question of the age — was such as to preclude all hope of the restoration of popery, though she had a strong leaning to Romish ceremonies herself, and her public measures fell short of that complete removal of abuses, which many desired to see effected. The Puritan party strongly objected to the habits and vestments commanded to be worn, nor did they think the prayer book itself free from superstition. This led to a great schism in the church, and occasioned a painful controversy, which lasted from the early days of Elizabeth to the restoration of Charles II. But we can only briefly refer to its commencement.

### THE PURITANS

“Among the first,” says Marsden, “who introduced into England the controversy which soon afterwards ripened into Puritanism, was the martyr, **bishop Hooper**. He had lived some time abroad, and was the friend of Bullinger and Gualter — the two leaders of the Protestant cause in Germany and Switzerland. Returning from his exile in the days of Edward VI, his piety and talents were at once appreciated, and he was nominated to the see of Gloucester. But his conscience was embarrassed; and in his person a contest began, which has never since been stilled. He demurred to the robes in which the episcopal investiture usually took place.” Hooper, with many of the exiles, had contracted a love for the severely simple style of worship which existed in the Reformed churches on the Continent, and led them to complain that the Reformation in England was left in an imperfect state: many abuses, both in worship and discipline, being still retained.

Hooper begged to decline the bishopric, or be admitted without the usual ceremonials. Through the influence of Peter Martyr and Bucer, then professors of divinity at Oxford and Cambridge, he at length consented to use the vestments at his consecration, and to preach in them, once at least, before the court. It is not certain that he ever wore them afterwards. But the

controversy was now begun; the elevated position of Hooper and his popular eloquence kept it alive. Some of the greatest names in the church of England of that day became friendly to the Reform pleaded for by the Puritans. Many refused to be consecrated in robes worn by the bishops of the church of Rome, and which they regarded as the badge of Antichrist. Elizabeth, though opposed to popery, was resolved, notwithstanding, to retain as much show and pomp in religious matters as might be possible. From this time the court party and the Puritan party became more decidedly opposed to each other. An order was issued by the queen, that exact uniformity should be maintained in all external rites and ceremonies. This was followed by another, requiring immediate uniformity in the vestments on pain of prohibition from preaching and deprivation from office. Matters were now brought to a crisis; multitudes of godly ministers were ejected from their churches, and forbidden to preach anywhere else. All hopes of further reform in the church being now at an end, the suspended ministers formed themselves into a body distinct from the church of England, which they regarded as only half reformed. Elizabeth was enraged, and threatened them with her royal displeasure; but in the face of persecution the Puritans, or *Nonconformists*, as they were now sometimes called, rapidly increased. The famous Thomas Cartwright, with three hundred more, threw off their surplices in one day within the walls of one college.<sup>421</sup>

During the reign of the **House of Stuart**, the tide of persecution ran high and strong, and the Puritans, deprived of all hopes of redress, fled in great numbers to the Continent. After the accession of Charles I fresh ceremonies were introduced by Laud and additional cruelties were inflicted on the Nonconformists. Emigration now seemed their only hope. A body of Puritans embarked as exiles, landed on the western shores of the Atlantic, and formed a settlement in New England. This colony of the “**Pilgrim Fathers**” soon received vast accessions; and the desire for emigration became so great, and the numbers leaving so many, that the government became alarmed, and stopped by royal warrant eight vessels when they were on the point of sailing from the Thames with emigrants to New England. On board were ejected ministers of high standing, and men of influence and rank, among whom were Oliver Cromwell, Hampden, Hesselrig, Lord Brook, and Lord Saye. The circumstances which followed this disembarkation are so remarkable, that we are compelled to pause and wonder. The overruling providence of God is very manifest. There is only One who knows the end from the beginning, and blessed are all they that put their trust in Him. Man knows not the future, and can neither make provision for his need nor against approaching danger. In 1642 — five years after the vessels were arrested — through the oppression of Charles and his popish ways the sword was drawn, and the war began, which ended in the subversion of his throne, his tragic execution, and the establishment of the Commonwealth under the protectorate of Cromwell.

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<sup>421</sup> *Faiths of the World*, vol. 2, p. 725.

**Puritanism**, properly so-called, became extinct under the Commonwealth. The vestments being generally laid aside, the ground of contention was removed. But the later Puritans went farther than the Hoopers and Cartwrights, and contended not only against the forms and vestments, but against the constitution of the Church of England; and these immediately became two great parties — PRESBYTERIANS AND INDEPENDENTS.

## **CHARLES II AND JAMES II.**

After the restoration of Charles II prelacy was restored with all its popish ceremonies. On May 19, 1662, the following act was passed: "That all who had not received episcopal ordination should be re-ordained by bishops. That every minister should, on or before the 24th of August following, declare his unfeigned assent and consent to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer, on pain of being deprived of his benefice," etc. "The dreaded day arrived. Great anxiety was felt as to whether the Reformation was to stand or fall in England. But the grace of God triumphed, and the enemy was defeated. Two thousand ministers, rather than submit to the act of uniformity, surrendered their livings, and left their parsonages. Thus were the most faithful and able ministers of the church of England cast out, ignominiously reduced to great poverty, and provoked by spiteful usage." — *Burnet*.

**Charles II** died in 1685, and his brother, the Duke of York, ascended the throne as **James II**. Although suspected of being a papist, he was allowed to take possession of the crown in peace and quietness. But his true character and intentions soon appeared. Being surrounded with Jesuits as his advisers, edict followed edict, the tendency of which was the overthrow of the laws and institutions of the realm, and to restore popery in all its power and completeness. One of these edicts, which was ordered to be read during divine service in all the churches, hastened the final struggle. Several of the bishops, and a vast number of the clergy refused to read it. Seven bishops were summoned before the ecclesiastical commission, and sent to the Tower by the notorious Judge Jeffreys. But the heart of the nation was too soundly Protestant to submit long to such tyranny. The bishops were tried at Westminster, and acquitted. The hall rang with shouts of joy, and the crowd rushing to the streets, crying, "Not guilty! Not guilty!" All London soon caught the flying joy; but James, agitated and troubled, heard in these sounds the mutterings of the coming storm.

The disgraceful conduct of Charles and James, and the atrocious cruelties of **Jeffreys** in England, and of Claverhouse in Scotland, most thoroughly convinced all parties that, if the slightest vestige of liberty was to be preserved, decisive measures must be adopted. A majority of the nobility favoured the intervention of William, Prince of Orange, son-in-law to James, and the next heir to the throne. Invitations were sent to the Hague, messengers were despatched, all entreating him to come over and mediate between the king and his subjects, and if necessary, to employ more stringent measures.

Having duly considered the various aspects of this great enterprise, and prepared for it, he sailed under the English banner, with the motto, "For the Protestant Religion and Liberties of England," and landed at Brixham, in Torbay, on the 5th of November, 1688. In the meantime James fled, being fully aware of the universal feeling of disaffection existing amongst his subjects. He scarcely made any show of opposition.

### **THE REVOLUTION OF 1688**

A national convention was summoned, the throne was declared vacant by the abdication of James, and the crown was settled on the Prince and Princess of Orange. "This was the triumph," says Wylie, "not of English Protestantism only; it was the triumph of the Protestantism of all Christendom... It was the revival, not less of the Scotch Covenanters, whose torn and blood-stained flag, upheld at the latter end of their struggle by only a few laymen, was soon to be crowned with victory."<sup>422</sup>

Thus was the **great revolution of 1688** accomplished without tumult or bloodshed. The ignominious flight of James and his queen to France relieved the ruling powers from all perplexities, and facilitated the arrangement of affairs connected with the act of settlement. Bills were speedily passed for the relief of the Protestants, and for securing the civil and religious liberties of the English people. William, who had been brought up a Calvinist, was strongly inclined to favour dissenters; but several of the bishops and many of the clergy contending for the divine right of kings, refused to take the required oaths to the new government, and became a troublesome faction, afterwards known by the term — Non-jurors. In Catholic Ireland, and among the popish clans of the Highlands of Scotland, there were strong factions who favoured the house of Stuart.

In Ireland Tyrconnel raised an army of Catholics, and was joined by James from France with a fleet of fourteen vessels, and well supplied by Louis with men, money, and arms. Several battles were fought before the country was subdued. **The siege of Derry** is one of the most memorable in history; but the famous battle of the Boyne, fought on July 1st, 1690, closed the dispute. James, finding all was lost, escaped once more to France, where he solaced himself with a devotion almost monastic, and which made even his Catholic friends laugh at him, as a man who had thrown away three kingdoms for a mass.

In Scotland Viscount Dundee, the notorious **Claverhouse**, succeeded in raising a considerable body of Highlanders in favour of their dethroned monarch. The English army, under the command of General Mackay, met Dundee and the clans at the pass of Killiecrankie, where a serious engagement took place. The battle went against the army of William, but the cause of James suffered an irreparable loss in the death of Claverhouse. He was killed

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<sup>422</sup> *History of Protestantism*, vol. 3, p. 624; *Universal History*, vol. 6, p. 288.

when on tip-toe in his stirrups urging on his men to the charge. The rallying power was now gone, and the popish clans laid down their arms, and gradually submitted to the authority of William.

## **THE PROTESTANT SUCCESSION**

The reign of William is especially worthy of our notice, because he placed the throne of the United Kingdom on a thoroughly Protestant foundation. It was provided in the **Bill of Rights**, “not only that every person in communion with the church of Rome, or marrying a papist, shall for ever be incapable of the crown, but also that in case of any British sovereign’s apostasy to popery, the people shall be absolved from their allegiance, and the next heir shall immediately succeed, if a Protestant, just as if the royal personage reconciled to the church of Rome, or marrying a papist, he actually died.” This famous bill immediately followed the Act of Settlement in 1689.

The English church, we may say, is the same now as it was in the time of William. The *Episcopalians* are the reigning party, and number among their adherents the royal family, the principal part of the nobility, and the greatest part of the people. The foundation of the Presbyterian establishment in Scotland was also firmly laid about the same time, by an act of the Scottish Parliament which ratified the “**Westminster Confession of Faith**,” as the creed of that church.<sup>423</sup>

The unbounded liberty which the British subject enjoys of publishing his opinions without restraint, and of worshipping God according to the dictates of his own conscience, enlightened by the truth as it is in Jesus, naturally causes various sects to arise, and controversies respecting things pertaining to religion to be perpetuated. Many of these may be most interesting to the student of ecclesiastical history but we have already exceeded our limits, and can do little more than notice the names of the leading seceders whose followers now form large sections of the professing church, with whom we are familiar.

## **EBENEZER ERSKINE**

The church of Scotland in her early days allowed no latitude of belief within her pale. We speak of what she was not alas! of what has disturbed her communion of late years. Her creed descends to the minutest particulars, and the slightest deviation from it was immediately canvassed and strictly dealt with according to that creed. The following remarks of Cunningham the historian, and one of her ministers, we fully accept as to what she has been, but not as to what she is at the present time. “All her ministers speak precisely the same things. The mind of each one presents a perfect impression of the Westminster divines. Notwithstanding the independence of the Scotch intellect,

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<sup>423</sup> Mosheim, vol. 4, pp. 297-378; Cunningham, vol. 2, p. 285; *Universal History*, vol. 6, p. 294.

it has seldom been exercised upon forms of faith. Notwithstanding the free scope of its metaphysics, the region of theology has been carefully avoided. Notwithstanding the schisms which have taken place, heresy has never been able to lift up her head... But notwithstanding this marvellous uniformity of faith, the church judicatories have required, in a few instances, to deal with heresy.”

In the year 1732, a controversy arose about the settlement of ministers in vacant parishes. The assembly passed an act to the effect that, if the planting of a parish devolved upon the Presbytery, from the patron not availing himself of his right, the call was to proceed from the heritors and elders. **Ebenezer Erskine**, a grave and spiritual man, but energetic and always on the popular side of public questions, strongly opposed the act. He advocated the free choice and election of the minister by the members. “What difference,” he exclaimed in the debate, “does a piece of land make between man and man in the affairs of Christ’s kingdom which is not of this world? We must have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ without respect of persons.” Many of the most spiritual sympathized with him, and several joined him in his protest. The case was carried from court to court; but the assembly would not yield, and the protectors would not yield, and so the secession took place. But the Lord overruled it for the revival of religion, the spread of the truth, and the blessing of precious souls.

These few seceders, four or five in number, immediately constituted themselves into a Presbytery, and commenced publishing and preaching in separation from the Established Church. This was the small beginning of the secession church, now *United Presbyterian*, which estimates its adherents at half a million.<sup>424</sup>

## **JOHN WESLEY**

In England, things were in a very low condition in the establishment, as they were in Scotland. There had been a great reaction since the time of the Puritans. The people had thrown off the restraints of Puritanism, or, rather, of Christianity, and returned to their games and pleasures. They soon sank into their former ignorance and worldliness. But the Lord in great mercy, just about this time, was preparing His chosen servants for the revival of His work, for the spread of the truth, and for the preaching of His gospel, which would reach the hearts and consciences of men in every sphere of life.

Samuel Wesley, the father of the celebrated **John and Charles Wesley**, was of Puritanical descent, and, marrying a daughter of Dr. Annesley — one of the ejected ministers — the mother came from an eminent Nonconformist family. When the revolution was effected, Mr. Wesley was the first who wrote in favour of that great national change, and dedicated his work to

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<sup>424</sup> Cunningham, vol. 2, p. 383; Thomson’s *History of the Secession Church*; Fraser’s *Life of Ebenezer Erskine*.

Queen Mary, who rewarded him with the rectory of Epworth, in Lincolnshire. Here, John, their second son, the founder of the Methodists, was born in June, 1703. After receiving an early education at Charterhouse school, he proceeded to Christchurch, Oxford, where his brother Charles, who was several years younger, joined him in 1727. From reading such books as Thomas a Kempis' "Imitation of Christ," and Jeremy Taylor's "Rules of Holy Living and Dying," they became extremely troubled about the salvation of their souls, but were dark as midnight as to the simple gospel — the way of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Having been baptized, and received the sacrament, they thought, as they had been taught, and as almost every one else believed at that time, that they could only hope to be saved by persisting in good works to the end of their days. This they tried, as Luther and Calvin had done before them; but, so far from being satisfied, they became every day more and more miserable. The God of all grace had touched their hearts, and created a void which nothing could fill but the knowledge of Christ in His Person and finished work.

In this troubled state of soul the Wesleys, with two or three others, held private meetings during the week for the promotion of personal piety, and rigidly observed all the rules prescribed by the University statutes. The strictness of their lives, and the regularity of their habits, brought down upon them the contempt and scorn of their godless fellow-students, who called them "Bible moths," "methodists," and "the holy club."

### **GEORGE WHITEFIELD**

Just about this time, a young man from Gloucester — as earnest and sincere as themselves, joined the little community — **George Whitefield**. He was descended from a respectable family; but his father, who was a wine merchant, ultimately kept the Bell Inn at Gloucester. There the future great preacher was born in 1714. For some time before meeting with the Wesleys, he had been the subject of much anxiety on matters of religion, and, like the Wesleys, he had been greatly perplexed by Thomas a Kempis, and also by Law's "Serious Call." But as we cannot pursue in detail the deep exercises through which they passed, and their subsequent course, we would only add that, ere long, they were led, by God's Holy Spirit and the plain truths of scripture, to know the gospel for their own peace and joy, and to preach it to others.

Being clergymen of the church of England, they were privileged to preach in the churches this new gospel — immediate pardon and salvation through faith in Christ, without works of human merit. But this was too simple and too scriptural to be tolerated, and in a short time almost every pulpit in England was closed against them. Thus driven outside, they were compelled to preach in the open air, and thereby inaugurated open-air preaching which has since become so common. In Moorfields, on Kennington Common, and such like places they preached in town and country to audiences numbering from ten to

twenty thousand. By the grace of God these “**twin apostles**” of England — Wesley and Whitefield — continued faithful and devoted to the end of their career.

They were used of God to rescue the English people from the depths of moral darkness, leading thousands, both in this country and in America, to the feet of Jesus. Men of all ranks acknowledged the force of their appeals — colliers and carpenters, ploughmen and philosophers; and many of the nobility yielded their hearts to the power of the truth. But their record is on high, and there the fruits of their labours shall abide throughout eternity. Whitefield died in America in 1770; and Wesley in London in 1791, in the eighty-eighth year of his age.<sup>425</sup>

### **REVIVAL AT CAMBUSLANG**

The eighteenth century was the period of great awakenings and great revivals in different countries and of a different character in each place. In the spring of 1742 strange symptoms of a religious revival began to appear to Cambuslang, in Lanarkshire, Scotland. **Mr. McCulloch**, the parish minister, is spoken of as a godly man, but nothing remarkable as a preacher. Some of his parishioners began to call upon him at the manse, in deep concern about the state of their souls. This was something entirely new and unexpected. But there was evidently a growing desire for the word of God, which resulted in a number of the parishioners signing a request for a weekly lecture in addition to the usual sabbath-day services. One evening in the month of February, he happened to exclaim, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” upon which, some persons in the meeting cried aloud in great distress because of their sins. From this evening such scenes became common. And now the people desired to have preaching every evening. Other ministers came to assist, and crowds gathered round the preachers on every occasion. Men and women were violently agitated; clasping their hands, smiting their breasts in great agony of mind. Others, as in a transport of joy, shouting, “He is come! I have got Him, and will not let Him go!” And there were others who seemed to be so full of the Spirit, and so supremely happy, that they exclaimed, “Now, Lord, let Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.”

As on all such marvellous visitations of the Holy Spirit, multitudes from all parts crowded to see the Lord’s great work. During the month of August when the sacrament of the supper was dispensed, about thirty thousand people were gathered together, and fourteen ministers were engaged in preaching on the green, and in dispensing the elements to one company after another inside the church. George Whitefield was one of the ministers, and appointed to preach in the evening. The tent stood on the margin of a little stream; in front of this rose a green bank in the form of an amphitheatre. About ten o’clock at

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<sup>425</sup> See, for details, *The Story of John Wesley*, by Frances Bevan, Holness, 21, Paternoster Row; *Life and Labours of George Whitefield*, Partridge and Co., 9, Paternoster Row.

night Whitefield rose to give the last address for the day. It was indeed nature's temple, as the preacher observed, built by God Himself for so great a concourse to worship in. As his deep voice in impassioned eloquence rolled over the vast multitude, it was answered by sighs and sobs, and soon the tens of thousands were melted in tears.

The minister, Mr. McCulloch, in speaking of this gracious visitation nine years afterwards, had to lament many backsliders; but still he spoke of hundreds who had been truly converted.

At **Kilsyth** and other places the work of God's Spirit was very similar. We can only give one short extract of a letter under date May 16th, 1742. "The Lord has shot His arrows very thick into the hearts of His enemies this day, not for their destruction, but that they might fall under Him. There was a great cry of awakened sinners this day; there have been seven and twenty awakened; all of them under so great agonies as we conceive those mentioned in Acts 2; besides others who were carried away by their friends whose names I have not got; I have dealt with them all this evening, as also Mr. Oughterson for a while, having sent for him. O praise the Lord, and pray much for us, and tell everybody to praise Him for His mercy to us, and that He will stay a long time with us after this sort."<sup>426</sup>

## **SUNDAY SCHOOLS**

It is generally known that the vast operations of the Sunday-school system, which have been so beneficial in their results for nearly a hundred years, commenced with a young man in Gloucester. **Robert Raikes**, the founder of Sunday schools, was born in 1735. His father was a printer, and conductor of the *Gloucester Journal*, who, after giving his son a liberal education, brought him up to his own business in which after a time he succeeded his father. The events of his life present nothing beyond those of an industrious tradesman in general; and but for his benevolent pity for the prisoners in Gloucester jail, and for the ignorant and neglected children of his native city, his name and memory might have sunk into the grave with himself.

He was struck with the number of wretched children whom he found in the suburbs and in the streets, especially on Sunday, and determined to make an effort at some improvement. He first found three or four decent women in the neighbourhood, who were capable of teaching children to read, to each of whom he agreed to give a shilling for the day's employment, and then induced the children to come to the school. The success was great; many of the children were not only eager to learn to read, but, on being presented with New Testaments, they began of their own accord to frequent places of

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<sup>426</sup> The above sketch of the work at Cambuslang is taken from Cunningham's *History of the Scotch Church*, vol. 2, p. 460. For lengthy and minute details, see *Historical Recollections of Revivals*, etc., by Dr. Gillies. This book gives an account of the remarkable periods of the success of the gospel from the first to the nineteenth century.

worship. At first he found many of the children were unwilling to come on account of their clothes not being good enough; but he assured such that “clean hands, clean faces, and combed hair,” were all that was required at school. The good effects of this new work were so evident, that in a short time Sunday schools were established in all directions; and each succeeding generation has developed more fully the wide extent and the blessed results of the Sunday-school system.

Most probably, the thoughts of Mr. Raikes, in the good work he was doing, did not extend beyond the immediate objects of his benevolence. But great results in the things of God depend not upon our plans or human display. The man of faith reckons upon God, and he can afford to be unobtrusive, unostentatious, and quiet in his work, leaving consequences with Him. Mr. Raikes is a happy illustration of what may be done by personal influence, and by taking up the work which the Master may have placed before our eyes, instead of waiting for the sanction of others, or a formal introduction to what others are doing. Individual responsibility is the true principle of Christ’s servant, and he must watch against every arrangement, or co-operation, that would take him off the ground of faith.

Mr. Raikes had the satisfaction before his death on April 5th, 1811, of seeing his first humble endeavours become the most efficient means of educating the children of the poor throughout the kingdom.<sup>427</sup>

## **FOREIGN MISSIONS**

At the Reformation in the sixteenth century, as we have already seen, the light of the gospel spread rapidly among the nations of Europe; and many at that time, fired with a holy zeal for the wider spread of the truth, sent missionaries to foreign parts. Among the first of these were the Swiss, the Swedes, the Dutch, and the Moravians. Many of them were exposed to great sufferings, and, in some instances, were very unsuccessful.

The **Baptist Missionary Society** seems to have taken the lead in the missionary enterprise in this country, and no doubt, by its example, aroused other churches to their responsibility in reference to the benighted heathen. In October, 1792, a few Baptist ministers assembled at Kettering, in Northamptonshire, united in constituting a Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen. **William Carey**, then a Baptist minister in Leicestershire, was the chief mover in this new society. He afterwards went to India as a missionary and became famous for the acquisition of Eastern languages. Soon after the publication of the New Testament in the Bengali language, translated by Mr. Carey, he was appointed by the Marquis of Wellesley, the British Governor-general, teacher of the Bengali and Sanskrit languages in the new college of Fort William. The labours of Messrs. Carey, Marshman, and Ward, in India, have been often written, and are generally

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<sup>427</sup> *Knight’s Dictionary of Biography.*

known. To Dr. Carey, it is said, belongs the honour of having awakened the zeal of the church in the important work of foreign missions.

In 1795 the **London Missionary Society** was formed. This Institution for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen, was composed of Christians of various denominations. The spread of the truth, irrespective of all denominational distinctions, was its motto. The institution of this society on so broad a scale was everywhere hailed as a new era in the christian church. Its attention was immediately fumed to the islands of the South Seas.

In 1799 the **Church Missionary Society** was formed, consisting of members of the church of England. It sent a mission to the Susoo country, in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone.

In 1796 the **Scottish Missionary Society** was formed in Edinburgh, and commenced its operations by a mission to the Foulah country in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone.

In 1812 the familiar names of Judson, Newell, Hull, and others, sailed under the auspices of "**The American Board for Foreign Missions,**" for Calcutta. They laboured in many parts of the eastern world.

In 1786 several **Wesleyan ministers** sailed as missionaries from England for Nova Scotia, but, after encountering a succession of storms, the captain directed his course for the West Indies. Having reached Antigua, and finding the inhabitants favourable, they resolved to attempt the establishment of a mission in the West Indies. Such were the circumstances, under the overruling providence of God, which led the Methodists to turn their attention to the heathen, and to adopt measures for the diffusion of Christianity among them.<sup>428</sup>

Surely we can thank God with full hearts for these societies, notwithstanding their many defects. For a number of years they have been scattering the blessings of Christianity among many tribes and tongues, where darkness reigned. The light and life of the gospel have been carried to millions who were sitting in the region and shadow of death. The rise and fall of empires, the achievement of great victories, the discovery and civilization of new countries, the improvements of the arts and sciences, are but as nothing compared with the diffusion of the gospel throughout the world, which brings "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14)

May the Lord greatly bless both our home and foreign missions, and give good success to the arduous labours of the Sunday school, that His name may be glorified, and multitudes of precious souls eternally saved.

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<sup>428</sup> For minute particulars and details of the formation and history of Missionary Societies, from the Reformation to the present time, see Dr. Brown's *History*, 3 vols. octavo.

We have now reached, by the good providence of God, the nineteenth century. But before speaking of the fresh and distinct work of God's Spirit in the early part of it, we must refer to the last two churches — Philadelphia and Laodicea — which give us the Lord's mind as to the condition of the professing church before it is finally and for ever rejected by Him.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 56

### PHILADELPHIA

In looking over the general course of the **churches** we find in Ephesus, declension; in Smyrna, persecution; in Pergamos, worldliness, in Thyatira, corruption, in Sardis, deadness; in Philadelphia we find the blessed Lord comforting a faithful remnant without characterizing their works, though well He knew them. He speaks not here, as in His address to the church in Sardis, of His authority in government, or of the plenitude of the Spirit in blessing, but of Himself in His moral glory. “These things saith He that is holy, He that is true.” This is the grand feature of this epistle — personal communion with the Lord Himself, as the Holy One and the True. He thus reveals Himself to the feeble few who are witnessing for Him. He speaks not of what He has, but of what He is. Although they had but “a little strength,” they were in close connection, in intimate communion with Himself.

Seeing the outward ruin of the church all around, and feeling that it is now a hopeless thing to expect its restoration to the principles of the word of God, they cleave to Him alone who changes not. Thankful, indeed, for the fellowship of saints who are walking in the truth, but all dogmas, theories, and mere prudential arrangements, are cold and heartless things to a true Philadelphian. Christ in the word, Christ in the glory — a written Christ and a living Christ — is alone appreciated by him. But would not this narrow his mind and his service? some may inquire. Just the opposite; we believe that it would separate him from the world and the world’s religion. The great apostle of the Gentiles writes his life and service in one word — Christ. “For me to live is Christ.” To have Christ as our object, our motive, and power, would be to extend our sphere of service by prayer and testimony to the wide circle of the Holy Spirit’s action. John also, in his first epistle, when speaking to the “little children” in the family of God, says, “But ye have an unction from the **Holy One**, and ye know all things.” And again, “We are in Him that is **True**, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” If the Christian has not Christ before him as his all-governing object, he has an idol. Christ, in His moral glory, is the true object for our affections, and the only standard for service, fellowship, and discipline. Christ is “He that is holy, He that is true.”

It is natural to many of us to shrink from the painful work of discipline, and to allow things to pass easily if we are not personally offended, or the respectability of the community not touched. But this is falling short of our standard. The question is not, as to church fellowship, what suits us, but what suits *Christ*. Is it holy? is it true? Holiness and truth should be the two great

pillars of the church's practical ways. The question must always be — Will this suit Christ, according to the character in which He presents Himself? Christ is “He that is holy, He that is true.”

There can be no doubt that the condition of the church in Philadelphia was entirely different from that of Sardis. The one was *negative*, the other *positive*. “I know thy works,” says Christ speaking to Sardis, “that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain:... for I have not found thy works perfect before God.” There was a fair outward appearance, but nothing was perfect, or complete. Their works fell short of the divine word; nothing was in full accordance with scripture. That which characterized the church in Philadelphia was keeping the word of Christ's patience, and not denying His name. And this is what characterizes a true Philadelphian, wherever he is found, from that day even until now. It is not a question of power, or of anything outwardly great, but of close, intimate, personal communion with Christ Himself, through the written word by the power of the Holy Spirit. All around may be going wrong, or going on with rites and ceremonies and worldly show. He walks with Christ through it all, and like the few names in Sardis, his garments are not defiled.

We further see here the grace of the Lord Jesus meeting the faithfulness of the Philadelphians with many privileges and blessings. “These things saith he that... hath the key of **David**; he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth. I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.” Christ not only reveals Himself in His Personal glory to these faithful ones, but also in His divine power and authority, because of their “little strength.” He has the key of David, according to the ancient prophecy — “And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.” (Isa. 22:22) Thus all the treasures of knowledge, all the riches of grace, all the power of the Spirit, all the resources of the royal house of David, are under His hand and at His disposal.

Should the preaching of the gospel be forbidden in any place, except according to canonical law, the preacher has only to wait on the Lord in the faith of a true Philadelphian. The key, he knows, is in the **Master's hand**. He must not seek to force the door open, the Lord's time may not be come. Paul was forbidden to speak in Asia at one time, but the door was afterwards opened to him, and he laboured there for years. It is said of the blessed Lord Himself, in John 10, “To him the porter openeth,” and the scribes and Pharisees could not hinder the lost sheep of the house of Israel from hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd. The waiting one is in the sympathy of Jesus, and can count on His promise, “Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.”

Three things are here said of the Philadelphians, which are particularly to be noticed. “Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.” Their condition was not marked by any outward display of power; they were of little note in the sight of the world. There was no assumption of strength. They had not the “**sign-gifts**” of Corinth, which were a testimony to the unbelieving world, and we gather from the Lord’s words that they were despised by Sardis — “Behold, I will make them to come and worship before Thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” Weakness characterized them, but they were without reproach from the Lord. And this very weakness, when mixed with faith, is strength. “When I am weak, then am I strong.” If outwardly weak, they were inwardly strong. The needed grace and inward power of life, which flows from the exalted Head in glory, for the nourishment of His members on earth, can never fail. And mark the emphasis on the word “My.” It is personal association with Christ in the sweetest way. “And hast kept *My* word, and hast not denied *My* name.” — “My word,” and “My name.” The written word is Christ’s own word, and is our only security and authority at all times, and is the means of direct communion with Himself. The *name* of the Lord means the revelation of what He is. We know Him as the Saviour, on whom the soul rests for salvation, and as the centre around whom we gather as the assembly of God by the power of the presence of the Holy Ghost. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt. 18:20)

The Lord, in verse 10, evidently looks forward to a period of seductive power, from which He will deliver His own. “Because thou hast kept the word of *My* patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” “Evil men and seducers,” says the apostle, “shall wax worse and worse.” The promise is, not that He will keep them when they *pass through* the tribulation — like Noah through the waters — but *from* it, like Enoch, who had been translated to heaven before the flood came. We are to hold fast the word of His patience, which is the hope of His return, and when He comes, He meets us with a crown. “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” This is very different from His coming as represented to Sardis — as a thief in the night.

Then come the promises. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is **New Jerusalem**, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Here the promises are all connected with the glory, the New Jerusalem, the home, the rest, the dwelling-place — not only of the true Philadelphian, but of every true believer in Christ Jesus. Still, there appears to be an answer in the glory to what we were here. Those who have taken the place of weakness in themselves, but of holy firmness against

evil, shall be made pillars there. And because they denied not His name here, He will write His own new name upon them there.

The blessed thought of association with Christ Himself is still kept up. And being associated with Him who is the object of the Father's infinite delight, we have this place of blessed nearness to Him in the temple, where He is worshipped in the beauty of holiness. Then these precious "Mys," which indicate the wondrous place we have in the temple — "My name," "My word," "My patience," "My God," and "My new name." Oh! what wondrous, marvelous, inconceivable, indescribable blessedness! To be pillars in the temple of God, and to go no more out! To have the name of God, the name of the city of God — the new Jerusalem — and the new name of Christ as the exalted Man in the glory, written upon us! A few moments' meditation of this scene of unmingled, unending, blessedness arrests the activity of our thoughts. We can only praise, wonder, adore, and long to be there.

"Lord of the worlds above  
How pleasant and how fair,  
The dwellings of Thy love  
The heavenly mansions are!  
To Thine abode our hearts aspire,  
With warm desire, to see our God."

### **LAODICEA**

It is not without a measure of reluctance that we turn away from a picture so beautiful to look on one so painful. **Laodicea** is a perfect contrast to Philadelphia. In the latter, the Lord is seen as waiting on His feeble but faithful ones with the key of David, to supply their need, and reveal Himself to them as the object of their affections. This is perfectly beautiful, and perfectly blessed. But the former are threatened with utter rejection because of their unfaithfulness. There was no heart for Christ Himself as the Holy One and the True. "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

The unfaithfulness of the church of the **Laodiceans** to its heavenly calling, and as a witness for Christ at the right hand of God, had become so open and unblushing that it could no longer be borne with. And this alas! is a true picture of the sad condition which the professing church will have reached when the judgment here pronounced shall be executed, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." The church still subsists in form, we know, and the judgment lingers, but it is certain. When this is accomplished, Christ will take His place as the "faithful and true witness," the "Amen," **the Verifier of all God's promises**, and in relationship with the new creation. What the church should

have done as a witness for God on the earth, Christ here presents Himself as doing, and secures every promise when all else had failed. “For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”

The failure, as we have seen, commenced in Ephesus; “thou hast left thy first love;” and Laodicea, the last of the seven, presents what Christendom will be when fully ripe for judgment. But, like the **Amorites**, her iniquity is not yet full. Grace still lingers; warnings are still given; the door still stands open; and whosoever will may enter in through faith in Christ Jesus, and find a refuge from the approaching judgments. Before a seal is broken, or a trumpet blown, or a vial poured out, the true church will have been caught up to heaven and will be peacefully worshipping in the temple of God.

What we have said of the successional character of these churches from the commencement of our history, seems fully proved by the Lord’s own declaration to Laodicea of unconditional rejection. Though the professing church has not yet reached that state of entire failure, it is fast hastening towards it. It certainly grows worse and worse every year. There is not only a very general return to ritualism, and a refined character of rationalism almost everywhere but an open, an unblushing infidelity, even in our seats of learning and among the instructors of the young. And if the fountain be so corrupt, what must the streams soon be! Holding fast Christ’s word, and not denying Christ’s name, and looking for His return, or the Philadelphian state, forms a small part of Christendom in the present day.

Indifference to the truth, and to the glory of the Person of Christ, is the sin of Laodicea — **lukewarmness** or latitudinarianism. It is not ignorance that produces such a state of things, but cold indifference. The church says, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” There was great pretension to spiritual riches in the church itself mark, “I am rich;” but this was the sure sign of their poverty, because spiritual riches can only be found in Christ. Hence the Lord adds, “And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Such is Christ’s estimate of the church which carries its head so high and boasts so loudly of riches within itself. It was without divine life, spiritual discernment, and destitute of the riches of Christ and the righteousness of God.

The application of the Laodicean state to the present time we think plain and easy. It is to be feared that there are many churches going on with no small show of spiritual riches, who care but little for the word and the name of the Lord Jesus. Where is the absolute authority of the word owned, and the name of Christ as the alone centre and power of the assembly? We speak not of individuals, but of churches so-called. And are there not many pulpits which go the length of calling in question the plenary inspiration of holy scripture? Where this is the case, there can be nothing for the hearers but human speculations, notwithstanding the great appearance of intelligence and of

spiritual wealth that may be displayed. But we must leave the reader to make his own application of both Philadelphia and Laodicea in the present time; they go on with Thyatira and Sardis, until the Lord return. Let the children of God, however, watch against lukewarmness as to the state of things around them, and rather seek to imitate the example of Christ who still pleads with deceived souls; He does not give them up yet.

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear and-anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.” The church was not looking to the Lord for these things, but boasting of riches within herself, as if she had been the vessel of grace instead of Christ. “I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.” But the gracious Lord knew her need, and counselled her to buy of Him without money and without price.

**Gold** is the symbol of **divine righteousness** — the righteousness of God which every Christian is made in Christ, hence it characterizes the standing and foundation of the saints. “The white raiment” is practical righteousness, the works of the saints, or first-fruits of the Spirit; such as “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” Where do we see such fruits of the Spirit in the professing church? At the present moment we cannot say that she holds a place above the world around her. Then there is the eye-salve; for they were in the blindness of nature as to the things of God, notwithstanding all their pretensions to spiritual light. It could not be said of the Laodiceans, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” Of whom could it be said in the present day? “Be zealous, therefore, and repent;” says the Lord. What grace, what patience, and what a needed word for today, and for all! His love lingers about the door; but alas! He is outside. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock!” Solemn position! Outside the door of His own house. But it is all individual here; the church is given up; still He perseveres. At length the knock is heard, the slumbering one awakes; the sheep know His voice; He gathers them out; the number of His people is accomplished; the body is complete, and caught up to His throne. And now, the end has come: the long threatened judgment is executed; the corrupt mass of Christendom is cast off for ever. Then follow the awful judgments of the earth, of apostate Christendom, and the day of Jacob’s trouble; but the true church, the holy elect bride of Christ is with Himself in the Father’s house of many mansions.

We hear no more of churches on the earth. All church history ends here. We have the first page of her wondrous history in Acts 2, and the last in Revelation 3. A door is opened in heaven: John is invited to come up hither, and see the things that follow the rapture of the saints. In chapter 1 he says, “And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.” In chapter 4, he is invited not to turn, but to ascend to heaven’s open door, and see what was passing within. And we, too,

may look in and see, in vision, the **living ones**, and the **four and twenty elders** crowned, enthroned, and worshipping. Thunderings, lightnings, and voices proceed from the rainbow throne, but the saints are in a state of perfect, blessed, and eternal repose. Chapter 4 celebrates the glory of God in creation; chapter 5, in redemption: the proper action of the book, strictly speaking, begins with chapter 6.

May the Lord enable both reader and writer to keep the word of His patience, not to deny His name, and to hold fast that which we have, that no man take our crown.

If the exposition we have given of the epistle to Philadelphia and to Laodicea be correct, we may expect to find in the nineteenth century an entirely fresh work of God's Spirit; and chiefly in recovering many truths which have been long overlooked by the professing church; probably since the days of the apostles. Philadelphia is the only church that is without reproach from the Lord; and He commends them for holding fast His word, for not denying His name, and for keeping the word of His patience, which means the constant expectation of His coming. These characteristics of an assembly we have not yet met with in the history of the church.

Almost immediately after the days of the apostles, human inventions were substituted for the word of Christ, and human arrangements for the authority of His name. And little, if anything, seems to have been said or written on the subject of the Lord's return for the church as His bride, down to the present century. Doubtless there may have been at different periods, some loving hearts that sighed and longed for His coming; but it was no part of the truth taught, either during the middle ages, or at the Reformation. The doctrines of the unity of the church of God, of the coming of the Lord as the proper hope of the church, and of the Holy Spirit's presence on earth, while Christ is seated at the right hand of God, were almost entirely overlooked by the Reformers.

### **PROPHETIC TRUTH**

The study of prophetic truth was greatly revived in the early part of this century. In the year 1821 a short treatise, entitled "**The Latter Rain**," by the Rev. Lewis Way, made its appearance. The main object of the writer is to prove from scripture the restoration of Israel, and the consequent glory in the land. His poem entitled, "Palingenesia," or "The World to Come," appeared in 1824. Thoughts on the "Scriptural Expectations of the Church," by Basilicus, followed it in 1826. The author takes a wider range in this book than in the former, though the kingdom of Israel occupies a prominent place. In 1827 the Rev. Edward Irving endeavoured to arouse the professing church, but especially his brethren in the ministry, to a sense of their responsibility as to the truth of prophecy. He translated the work of Ben Ezra, a converted Jew, on "The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty," with a long preliminary

discourse. This book was originally written in Spanish, and first published in Spain in the year 1812.

The circulation of these books, with some others that appeared about this time, and fresh articles constantly appearing in the magazines, awakened a deep interest in the prophetic scriptures, which became at that time an entirely new study, and led to the establishment of what were called “**The Prophetic Meetings,**” in Great Britain and Ireland — they were held chiefly at Albury Park in England, and at Powerscourt in Ireland. Clergymen and private gentlemen attended those meetings for some time; but, in their reading, it does not appear that they saw much beyond the restoration of Israel, and the glory of the millennial kingdom. The relations of Christ to the church, as distinct from the destiny of Israel and the earth, were not then clearly seen.

### **CHURCH TRUTH**

Just about this time the Spirit of God was evidently working in many minds, and in different parts of the country, and awakening many of His children to the importance, not only of prophetic truth, but of what He has revealed in His word respecting the church as the body of Christ, formed and energized by the Holy Spirit. This was especially the case at that moment in Dublin. A few earnest christian men became deeply exercised in heart and conscience, as to the low condition of things in the several sections of professing Christendom, and as to the great contrast between the church of God, viewed in the light of His word, and that which man calls the church. These convictions resulted — though with deep searchings of heart, and many painful feelings — in a positive secession from the existing religious systems with which they had been severally connected.

This was a new thing in the history of the church. The best of the Reformers in all ages had no wish to leave the communion of the church of Rome, had she consented to the reform of abuses. Nearly all of them were excommunicated. Even **the Puritans**, and **Wesley** and **Whitefield**, were forced out of the establishment. But as many are still alive, of those who took this place of separation in the early part of this century, we shall do little more than state the origin of this community, and give a brief outline of its progress. We could not bring down the history of the church to the present time without giving it a place. But of that which has appeared in print, and been written by themselves, we may freely speak. Their writings, in tracts, books, and periodicals, are abundant and widely spread over the face of Christendom, so that they are well fitted to speak for themselves.

### **“THE BRETHREN”**

In the winter of 1827-8, four christian men who had for some time been exercised as to the condition of the entire professing church, agreed to come together on Lord’s day mornings, for worship and communion in the breaking of bread, according to the word of the Lord; namely, **Mr. Darby**,

**Mr. [afterwards Dr.] Cronin, Mr. Bellett, and Mr. Hutchinson.** Their first meeting was held in the house of Mr. Hutchinson, 9, Fitz-William Square, Dublin. They had for a considerable time been studying the scriptures — along with others who attended their reading meetings — and comparing what they found in the word of God with the existing state of things around them, they could find no expression of the nature and character of the church of God, either in the national establishment, or in the various dissenting bodies. This brought them into the place of separation from all these ecclesiastical systems, and led them to come together in the name of the Lord Jesus, owning the presence and sovereign action of the Holy Spirit in their midst, and thus endeavouring, according to their light, “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Matt. 18:20; Eph. 4:3, 4) The brethren continued to meet for some time in Fitz-William Square, and others were gradually added to their number.

### **THE BRETHREN’S FIRST PAMPHLET**

Here we have something most definite and positive as to their principles and starting-point: something more to be relied upon than general report or personal recollections.

In the year 1828 Mr. Darby published his first pamphlet, entitled, “**The Nature and Unity of the Church of Christ.**” We may consider this tract as a statement of what the young community believed and practised, though not in the form of a confession, and further, as presenting the divine ground on which they acted. It may also be considered to contain nearly all the elements of those distinctive truths which have been held and unfolded by Brethren from that day even until now. Not that the writer thought anything of this at the time; he was simply making known for the help of others what he had learnt from the word of God for himself. But who could question the guidance of the Holy Spirit in such a production? Surely He was leading His chosen instruments by a way which they knew not, that the blessing which followed might be seen to be of His own grace and truth.<sup>429</sup>

As this paper was the first public testimony of a movement which was so rapidly to produce such great and blessed results in liberating souls, we will here give for the convenience of the reader a few extracts, chiefly as to the unity of the church.

“We know that it was the purpose of God in Christ to gather together in one all things in heaven and on earth; reconciled unto Himself in Him; and that the church should be, though necessarily imperfect in His absence, yet by the energy of the Spirit the witness of this on earth, by gathering the children of God which were scattered abroad. Believers know that all who are born of the

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<sup>429</sup> See a Reprint of the Original in the *Collected Writings* of J.N. Darby, Ecclesiastical, vol. 1, G. Morrish, 20, Paternoster Square, also in the *Christian Witness*, vol. 1. and as a separate tract published by W.H. Broom, 25, Paternoster Square.

Spirit have substantial unity of mind, so as to know each other, and love each other as brethren. But this is not all, even if it were fulfilled in practice, which it is not; for they were so to be all one, as that the *world* might know that Jesus was sent of God. In this we must all confess our sad failure. I shall not attempt so much to propose measures here for the children of God as to establish healthful principles, for it is manifest to me that it must flow from the growing influence of the Spirit of God and His unseen teaching: but we may observe what are positive hindrances, and in what that union consists...

“In the first place, it is not a formal union of the outward professing bodies that is desirable, indeed it is surprising that reflecting Protestants should desire it: far from doing good, I conceive it would be impossible that such a body could be at all recognized as the church of God. It would be a counterpart to Romish unity; we should have the life of the church and the power of the word lost, and the unity of spiritual life utterly excluded. Whatever plans may be in the order of Providence, we can only act upon the principles of grace; and true unity is the unity of the Spirit, and it must be wrought by the operation of the Spirit... If the view that we have taken of the state of the church be correct, we may adjudge that he is an enemy to the work of the Spirit of God who seeks the interests of any particular denomination; and that those who believe in ‘the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ’ ought carefully to keep from such a spirit; for it is drawing back the church to a state occasioned by ignorance and non-subjection to the word, and making a duty of its worst and most anti-christian results. This is a most subtle and prevailing mental disease, ‘*he followeth not us;*’ even when men are really Christians...

“Christians are little aware how this prevails in their minds; how they seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ; and how it dries up the springs of grace and spiritual communion; how it precludes that order to which blessing is attached — the gathering together in the Lord’s name. No meeting, which is not framed to embrace all the children of God in the full basis of the kingdom of the Son, can find the fulness of blessing, because it does not contemplate it — because its faith does not embrace it...

“Accordingly, the outward symbol and instrument of unity is the partaking of the Lord’s supper, ‘for we being many are... one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.’ And what does St. Paul declare to be the true intent and testimony of that rite? That whensoever ‘we eat of that bread and drink of that cup, we do show the Lord’s death *till He come.*’ Here then are found the character and life of the church — that into which it is called — that in which the truth of its existence subsists, and in which alone is true unity...

“Am I desiring believers to correct the churches? I am beseeching them to correct themselves by living up, in some measure, to the hope of their calling. I beseech them to show their faith in the death of the Lord Jesus, and their

boast in the glorious assurance which they have obtained by it, by conformity to it — to show their faith in His coming, and practically to look for it, by a life suitable to desires fixed upon it. Let them testify against the secularity and blindness of the church; but let them be consistent in their own conduct. ‘Let their moderation be known unto all men.’ While the spirit of the world prevails, spiritual union cannot subsist. Few believers are at all aware how the spirit which gradually opened the door to the dominion of apostasy, still sheds its wasting and baneful influence in the professing church... I do believe that God is working, by means and in ways little thought of, in ‘preparing the way, and making His paths straight’— doing by a mixture of providence and testimony the work of Elias. I am persuaded that He will put men to shame exactly in the things in which they have boasted. I am persuaded that He will stain the pride of human glory, ‘and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be brought low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.’ ...

“ But there is a **practical part** for believers to act. They can lay their hands upon many things in themselves *practically inconsistent with the power of that day* — things which show that their hope is not in it — *conformity to the world, which shows that the cross has not its proper glory in their eyes...* Further, unity is the glory of the church; but unity to secure and promote *our own interests* is not the unity of the church, but *confederacy* and denial of the nature and hope of the church. Unity, that is of the church, is the unity of the Spirit, and can only be in the things of the Spirit, and therefore can only be perfected in spiritual persons... But what are the people of the Lord to do? Let them wait upon the Lord, and wait according to the teaching of His Spirit, and in conformity to the image, by the life of the Spirit, of His Son...

“But if any will say, If you see these things, what are you doing yourself? I can only deeply acknowledge the strange and infinite shortcomings, and sorrow and mourn over them; I acknowledge the weakness of my faith, but I earnestly seek for direction. And let me add, when so many who ought to guide go their own way, those who would have gladly followed are made slow and feeble, lest they should in any wise err from the straight path, and hinder their service, though their souls may be safe. But I would earnestly repeat what I said before: the unity of the church cannot possibly be found till the common object of those who are members of it, is the glory of the Lord, who is the Author and Finisher of its faith — a glory which is to be made known in its brightness at His appearing, when the fashion of this world shall pass away... The Lord Himself says, ‘That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.’ (John 17)

“Oh, that the church would weigh this word, and see if their present state does not preclude necessarily their shining in the glory of the Lord, or of fulfilling that purpose for which they were called. And I ask them, Do they at all look for or desire this? Or are they content to sit down and say that His promise is come utterly to an end for evermore? Surely if we cannot say, ‘Arise, shine, for Thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,’ we should say, ‘Awake, awake, put on Thy strength, arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, as in the generations of old.’... Will He give His glory to one division or another? Or where will He find a place for it to rest upon amongst us?...

“ I have gone beyond my original intention in this paper. If I have in anything gone beyond the measure of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, I shall thankfully accept reproof, and pray God to make it forgotten.”

### **THE BRETHREN’S FIRST PUBLIC ROOM**

The effect of these statements — so plain and scriptural — was immediate and great. They found an echo in many a heart. Earnest Christians, feeling and mourning over the low condition of the churches, welcomed the truth thus brought before them. Many left their respective denominations, and joined the new movement. The numbers so increased that in little more than a year, the house of Mr. Hutchinson was found to be unsuitable for their meetings. Mr. Parnell (afterwards **Lord Congleton**), who appears to have united with the Brethren in 1829, hired a large auction room in Aungier Street, for the use of the Brethren on the Lord’s day. His idea was, that the Lord’s table should be a public witness of their position. This was the **Brethren’s first public room**. There they commenced breaking bread in the spring of 1830, and it may be taken as a sample of the rooms which Brethren have generally occupied in all parts of the country ever since. In order to make room for the Lord’s day morning, three or four of the brothers were in the habit of moving the furniture aside on Saturday evening. Many, on their first visit, felt the place to be very strange, having been accustomed to all the propriety of churches and chapels. But the truths they heard were new in those days; such as, the efficacy of redemption, the knowledge of pardon and acceptance, the oneness of the body of Christ, the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, and the Lord’s second coming.

“There is some difficulty,” says Mr. Marsden,<sup>430</sup> “in laying before the reader, in a simple form, the principles of this body. It puts forth no standards of faith, nor publishes any forms of worship or discipline. It professes to practise Christianity as Christianity was taught by our Lord and the apostles in the New Testament... The Brethren equally object to the national church and to all forms of dissent. Of national churches, one and all of them, they say, ‘that the opening of the door to receive into the most solemn acts of worship

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<sup>430</sup> See *Dictionary of Christian Churches*.

and christian fellowship the whole population of a country, is a latitudinarian error.' Dissenters, on the other hand, 'are sectarians, because they close the door on real Christians, who cannot utter the shibboleth of their party.'... The one system makes the church wider, the other narrower, than God's limits. Thus in either way, the proper scriptural idea of the church is practically destroyed — dissent virtually affirming that it is not one body, but many, while nationalism virtually denies that this one body is the body of Christ. That which constitutes a church is the presence of the **Holy Ghost** in the assembly. 'It is the owning of the Holy Ghost as the really present, sole, and sufficient sovereign in the church during our Lord's absence.' This is the leading feature in the testimony of Brethren."

Mr. Marsden further observes on the subject of ministry, quoting from their writings: "So far from supposing there is no such thing as ministry, Brethren hold, and have always held, from Ephesians 4: 12, 13, that Christ cannot fail to maintain and perpetuate a ministry so long as His body is here below. Their printed books and tracts, their teachings in private and in public affirm this as a certain settled truth; insomuch that it is as absurd to charge them with denying the permanent and divine place of ministry in the church on earth, as it would be to charge Charles I with denying the divine right of kings. Wherever it has pleased God to raise up pastors after His own heart, they gladly, thankfully own His grace, and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. "

In a paper lately written by Mr. Darby about the Brethren at the request of a French journalist, we have not only the facts, but the thoughts and feelings connected with their beginning. "We were only four men," he says, "who came together for the breaking of bread and prayer, on the authority of that word, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matt. 18:20); and not, I hope, in a spirit of pride and presumption; but deeply humbled at the state of things around us, and praying for all Christians, and recognizing all those in whom the Spirit of God was found as true Christians, members of the body of Christ, wherever they were ecclesiastically. We thought of nothing else but satisfying the need of the soul according to the word of God; nor did we think of it going any farther. We proved the promised presence of the Lord; and others, feeling the same need, followed in the same path and the work spread in a way we never thought of in the least."

It is very apparent from this extract, that the Brethren had no thought of constructing a fresh system, or of reconstituting the church as God had constituted it at first — of restoring it to its Pentecostal glory. This was the snare into which Satan wiled that otherwise noble soul — **Edward Irving**. But the Brethren seemed to have had no plan, no system, no organization. They held the common faith of all orthodox Christians with regard to foundation truths; but, having received light from God's word as to what the calling, position, and hopes of the church are, they could no longer remain in

what man and the world called “the church.” These thoughts and searchings of heart issued, as we have seen, in the secession of many individuals from the various bodies of professing Christians, and in their coming together for worship and communion on the ground of the “one body,” as formed and directed by the “One Spirit.”

### **THE SPREAD OF THE TRUTH**

Mr. Darby, who seems from the first to have had a love for travelling, or rather for carrying the truth from place to place, soon after the formation of the meeting in Fitz-William Square, set out on his mission; and in a truly apostolic spirit he has steadily gone on for fifty years, and never more so than during the last ten or fifteen. Limerick was the first place he visited. He held reading meetings, to which some of the gentry and clergy came. Thomas Maunsell, who lived there, worked with him, and was the active labourer for a long time. Mr. Darby went on to Clare, which led to the Lord’s work at Ennis, where Thomas Mahon went on with it. He then went over to Paris, saw some Christians there, and had readings in the same quiet way. On his return to England, he visited Cambridge and Oxford, and then went down to Plymouth at the request of Mr. Newton, where he met with Captain Hall, who was then preaching in the villages. Reading meetings were held, and ere long, a few began to break bread. This was about the year 1831.

### **THE ORIGIN OF THE TITLE —“PLYMOUTH BRETHREN”**

Their first public meeting-place in Plymouth was called “Providence Chapel,” and, as they refused to give themselves any name, they were only known as “Providence people.” But when the brothers began to go outside the town and preach the gospel in the villages — then a rare thing — they were spoken of as “**Brethren from Plymouth,**” which naturally resulted in the designation, “**The Plymouth Brethren.**” This new title rapidly spread over England and elsewhere. As the numbers increased, the little chapel was bought and enlarged considerably. The effect of the truth on the hearts and consciences of the Brethren was soon manifest. There was great freshness, simplicity, devotedness, and separation from the world. Such features of spirituality have always a great attraction for certain minds; and many, no doubt, who left their respective denominations and united with the Brethren had very undefined thoughts as to the nature of the step they were taking. But all was new: they flocked together, and gave themselves to the study of the word of God, and soon experienced the sweetness of christian communion, and found the Bible — as they said — to be a new book. It was, no doubt, in those days of virgin freshness a most distinct and blessed work of God’s Spirit, the influence of which was felt not only throughout this Country, but on the continent, and in distant lands.

It was no uncommon thing at this time to find valuable jewelry in the collection boxes, which was soon turned into money, and given to the deacons

for the poor. But the bloom of this new movement was soon to be blighted by the subtlety of Satan. Mr. Newton, though one of the earliest labourers in Plymouth, seems never to have entered into the truth of the position occupied by Brethren, but, almost from the first, to have pursued a course distinct from the others. The tendency of his teaching, though for a time most speciously disguised, was to undermine and neutralize those distinctive truths which the Lord was bringing out by the ministry of the Brethren, and to set up afresh, though in another form, all that had been renounced. His aim was clerical position and authority; and thus practically denying the first principles of the church of God, he fell into the snare of Satan. Several of the Brethren who had laboured much in Plymouth, not feeling happy with Mr. Newton's course, left to work elsewhere. Mr. Darby went abroad, Captain Hall to Hereford, Mr. Wigram to London; and Mr. Bellett, at this time, was ministering with great acceptance in Dublin.

### **FALSE DOCTRINE DETECTED**

Soon after the year 1845, when the numbers at Plymouth, Devonport, and Stonehouse had reached about a thousand souls, troubles arose which caused the first breach among the Brethren; but it was not until 1848 that what had been strongly suspected by some came to the light and brought matters to a crisis at Plymouth. It was discovered by Mr. Harris — through copious notes of Mr. Newton's lectures accidentally falling into his hands — that he had been diligently and systematically teaching, not only that which is ecclesiastically, but that which is fundamentally heretical as to Christ. When this became known, Brethren in all parts were deeply affected by the sad tidings, and numerous meetings were held in different parts of the country to investigate the charges. Nearly all were agreed, after much prayer and confession, that the doctrines which Mr. Newton had been teaching were not only false, but utterly subversive of all that is essential to Christianity.

But though they were thus agreed as to the character of the heresy, they were divided in their judgment as to the principle of separation from it. One part thought that the poison of the doctrines — which had been insidiously taught for some years — might have infected more than were yet manifested; and, therefore, they could have no fellowship with any who sympathized with the doctrines, or had fellowship with their author at the breaking of bread. Others thought these terms of communion were too strict, that each one applying for fellowship should be examined, and if it were found that they neither understood nor had imbibed the false doctrines, they should be received, even though they came from Mr. Newton's meeting; that every true Christian should be received on the ground of his individual soundness in the faith, no matter from what meeting he came. But many strongly objected to this way of dealing with so grave a matter. They maintained that the glory of Christ was in question, as well as the purity of His assembly, that, on this principle, the door was left open for the heresy to come in and that it was giving up the

unity of the church of God, as the ground of action, and going back to independency.

## **THE DIVISION**

On this point the Brethren divided. The one part maintained, that, on the principle of the one body, a person coming from a meeting where false doctrine was known to be held, is tainted, though personally sound; and that in receiving one member of the community all are received. This they sought to prove by the divine principle which the apostle applies to the assemblies at Corinth and Galatia: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" The other part adhering to the open ground which they had adopted, the breach widened, and reconciliation became hopeless.

Thus the Brethren have stood from that day until now. Their history is well known. Only one thing further need be noticed. From this time, the term, "The Brethren," as found in statistics, or controversial and other writings, applies almost exclusively to those who adhered to the original principles of Brethren. In the census of 1851, three years after the division, the writer concludes his article by stating that "The number of places of worship which the census officers in England and Wales returned as frequented by the Brethren was 132; but probably this number is below the truth, in consequence of the objection which they entertain to acknowledge any sectarian appellation." In a list of meetings which they publish annually for the convenience of Brethren who may be travelling, they give the addresses of 523 in England, 48 in Ireland, and 75 in Scotland. There are also a goodly number on the Continent of Europe, in Australia and New Zealand, in the West Indies, in Canada, and in the United States. And indeed almost everywhere, if we may believe the testimony of **The Southern Review**, which says:

"The Society, or order of christian men, usually styled, '**The Plymouth Brethren**,' has already, and almost without observation, spread over the face of the civilized world. It seems, in fact, to have stolen a march on Christendom, and must now — whether for good or for evil — be acknowledged as a power in the present awful crisis in the world's history, or tremendous conflict between the powers of light and darkness. That it is felt to be such a power, is evident, from the fact of the controversy about Plymouth Brethren coming up all over the Protestant world, just now, and by the innumerable articles, pamphlets, and volumes, which this widespread controversy has called forth. We have placed, at the head of this article, only three references to the literature connected with this controversy, but, if we had so chosen, we might easily have embraced in our list the titles of more than a hundred volumes of the same literature."<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> See *The Southern Review* for April, 1877, published under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopalian church. South Baltimore: Bledsoe, and Herrick. London, Trubner.

The above article is written with great vigour, extends to seventy-nine pages, and discusses the question of "Plymouth Brethrenism" more fully than any of the "hundred volumes" referred to that have come under our notice. The writer, being a Methodist, of course does not agree with all their doctrines, but he admires their zeal in spreading the work, admits that he has profited by their writings, and heartily rebukes their unfair critics.

### **THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND**

This large and influential section of the Scottish church was organized into a religious denomination, distinct from the Establishment, in the year 1843. The conflict between the "**Evangelicals**" and the "**Moderates**," which at length terminated in this great division, was chiefly on the long vexed question of patronage.

From the days of **Ebenezer** and **Ralph Erskine** — whose secession from the Established church we have already noticed — the evangelical party had been opposed to the interference of patrons with the religious rights of congregations. But under the powerful ministry of **Dr. Chalmers** in Glasgow, and **Dr. Thomson** in Edinburgh, the tide of popular feeling was decidedly turned in favour of the anti-patronage movement. In the General Assembly of 1834, the evangelical party introduced the celebrated Veto Act, which was passed by a majority of forty-six. By this act, it was declared to be a fundamental law of the church, that no minister should be intruded on any congregation contrary to the will of the christian people; and the better to effect this, it enacted, that if a majority of male heads of families, being communicants, should object to any presentee, the presbytery, on that ground alone without inquiry into the reasons, should also reject him. The objectors, however, were required, if called upon, to declare solemnly before the presbytery that they were actuated by no malicious motives, but solely by a conscientious regard to their own spiritual interests, or those of the congregation. The legality, or rather the illegality of this act, which directly interfered with the civil rights of patrons, was soon put to the test.

In the course of a few months after the Veto Act had passed into ecclesiastical law, the Earl of Kinnoul presented Mr. Robert Young to the parish church of Auchterarder; but the presentee, not meeting with the approval of the congregation, was rejected, and the presbytery refused to ordain him. The earl, not willing to be deprived of his rights as a patron appealed to the civil tribunals; long law-suits followed, and the whole question was raised as to the terms of the connection between church and state.

The decision of the Court of Session not only went against the church party, but proceeded to enforce compliance with its decisions by pecuniary penalties, and awarding damages to the persons deprived of their churches, by the presbytery refusing to induct them. The protesters were now a large, popular, and influential body, they would admit of no compromise; they took the

ground of martyrs, and maintained that they were contending for the “CROWN RIGHTS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE ALONE KING AND HEAD OF THE CHURCH.” Public meetings were held in all parts of the country, and addressed by ministers in the most exciting style, until Scotland was in a state of religious agitation and ferment from one end to the other. Lay patronage was denounced, as contrary to the spirit, principles, and constitution of the Presbyterian church of Scotland and the Veto Act treated as of divine appointment. In place of submitting to the law as declared by the Court of Session the assembly of that year — 1842 — declared by a large majority, that lay patronage ought to be abolished, they also issued a “Claim of Rights” against the encroachments of the civil courts. A memorial to this effect was presented to the government, but with no favorable effect; and on the 9th of August, the House of Lords gave judgment against the majority of the presbytery of Auchterarder, finding them liable in damages to Mr. Young and the Earl of Kinnoul.

### THE DISRUPTION

All hope of a pacific arrangement on the part of the government being now at an end, the momentous event, which many had for some time been dreading, seemed unavoidable. From the high and independent position which Dr. Chalmers and his followers had taken, they could not in honour draw back; therefore they nobly resolved to separate from the Established church. At the General Assembly which met in May, 1843, Dr. Welsh, the moderator, laid a protest on the table to this effect, and withdrew, followed by those who adhered to the protest, and proceeded in solemn silence to Tanfield Hall, Canonmills — a large building situated at the northern extremity of the city of Edinburgh. There they constituted themselves into the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, choosing Dr. Chalmers as their first moderator.

“On Tuesday, the 23rd of May, the ministers and professors, to the number of *four hundred and seventy-four*, solemnly subscribed the **Deed of Demission**, formally renouncing all claim to the benefices which they had held in connection with the establishment, declaring them to be vacant, and consenting to their being dealt with as such. Thus, by a regular legal instrument, the ministers completed their separation from the establishment, and the Free church of Scotland assumed the position of a distinct ecclesiastical denomination, holding the same doctrines, and observing the same forms of worship as had been received and observed in the National church.”

Thus, in one day, these ordained ministers of the Scottish establishment gave up their manses, their churches, their benefices, and state support. Their wives and children had to leave their comfortable parsonages with their glebes and gardens. To many of these the new position wore a gloomy aspect, and they were ready to blame the leaders for having gone too far. But the zeal and sympathy of the people soon placed their ministers in finer buildings as

churches than they had left, and abundantly met all their need. In a few years about eight hundred new churches were built by the liberality of the people, which must have cost nearly a million of money. Dr. Chalmers, foreseeing what must take place, had made arrangements some months before the disruption, for establishing associations throughout the country, with the view of collecting funds for the support of the ministry; and so successful was his plan that, before the day of trial came, *six hundred and eighty-seven* separate associations had been formed in all parts of the country, and at the close of the first year of the history of the Free Church, her income amounted to the munificent sum of *three hundred and sixty thousand, seven hundred and nineteen pounds, fourteen shillings, and threepence*.

Such was the sympathy felt with this movement in Scotland, that all contributed liberally to the various funds connected with the Free church. And even to this day, after the lapse of more than thirty years, the source of her supply, we are told, shows not the slightest symptoms of exhaustion.<sup>432</sup>

### **THE AWAKENING IN 1859**

The great awakening in 1859, which filled so many lands with the blessed fruits of salvation, being still fresh in many minds, we need do little more than notice its humble beginnings. It has been a point of special interest to us all through our history to know the beginning of things. When the Spirit of God works, and means to accomplish something great, either in individuals or in nations, He usually commences without observation: man sounds a trumpet before him.

### **THE ORIGIN OF NOON-DAY PRAYER-MEETINGS**

In September, 1857, a city missionary in New York, observing that masons and other workmen had some time for rest during their dinner hour, proposed to speak to them about the things of the Lord. The men being agreeable, they gathered around the missionary for about fifteen or twenty minutes. The interest increased, and as the winter drew near, the missionary applied for the loan of a schoolroom, connected with a chapel in Fulton Street, where the men were working. This being granted, the men assembled for their brief service. But the Lord had a great work to do there. Others were attracted to the little noon-day meeting; the unction of the Holy Spirit was felt; divine blessing was manifested, and it soon became a large meeting. Similar meetings sprang up in different places, and were commended and sanctioned by the presence of ministers, men of business, the gentry, and all classes. In a short time, noon-day prayer meetings spread over the United States, a great Revival followed, and thousands of precious souls were said to be converted.

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<sup>432</sup> For full particulars as to this opulent church, see *Appendix to the Scots' Worthies*, Blackie, Glasgow; also *Faiths of the World*.

## THE NORTH OF IRELAND

In the same month of the same year, as if by concert, four young men, near Connor, county Antrim, were led by the same blessed Spirit to commence what was termed “**The Believers’ Fellowship Meeting.**” One main object of these young men, in connection with this meeting, was to pray to God that He would bless their labours, as Sunday-school teachers, and that He would revive by His Holy Spirit the churches around them, which they felt to be in a dull dead condition. This humble beginning, like the one on the other side of the Atlantic, was greatly blessed of God; numbers rapidly increased. The power of prayer was soon felt throughout the whole neighborhood. Souls were converted in the prayer-meeting, the Spirit of God was working mightily, and the spirit of prayer so prevailed, that in the following year — 1858 — prayer-meetings were almost innumerable. There were known to be in one district, about sixteen meetings for prayer every night in the week. These facts we learnt from living witnesses on the spot at the time.<sup>433</sup>

Thus were the foundations of the great Revival in the north of Ireland strengthening and deepening for about eighteen months before it burst forth to public view, and rose to such a glorious height in 1859. Conversion at that time was frequently accompanied with utter physical prostration for several hours. A similarly unpretending agency was employed in beginning the work of Revival in Greenock, Glasgow, and other parts of Scotland.

## THE WEEK OF PRAYER

Just about this time, a request was sent out by some missionaries in Lodiana, calling upon all Christendom to set apart the second week in January, 1860, as a week of prayer. The call was much talked of, and when the time came, it was most heartily responded to by all classes of Christians. It was a week of real, earnest prayer to God, that He would revive His own work, and bless the preaching of the gospel to the conversion of many, many, souls. This cry arose from every quarter of the globe, and was continued in many places far beyond the one week.

We can testify, as partakers of that marvellously gracious visitation of the Spirit, to the power of prayer which then prevailed, and to the abundant showers of blessing which fell on the church and on numberless precious souls. Meetings for prayer were held in the early morning, at noonday, and in the evening, so that all classes might be suited; and a spirit for gospel preaching, altogether unknown before, was then awakened. Preachers sprang up from the very lowest condition of society, as if by a miracle, and were possessed of such gifts as to attract thousands night after night. The grandees of the land, too, turned preachers of the gospel, and the poorest were privileged to hear the glad tidings from the lips of noble lords, and then to be

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<sup>433</sup> For particulars of the awakening, and the work of God in Ireland, see vols. 2 and 3 of *Things New and Old*.

shaken by the hand, and entreated in the most kindly loving way, to give their hearts to Jesus, and to be decided for Him. The great work of the gospel seemed to have passed entirely into the hands of laymen; but it was no time to find fault with that which was uncanonical. God was working, who is above the routine of traditional order; and thousands of souls were converted, from the poorest to the richest, with numbers of little children.

But this gracious visitation of the Spirit in special power was not of long continuance. In a few years man's bustling importance became more manifest than the Spirit's power. The meetings were kept up, and certain forms were introduced, to make them outwardly more orderly, but the vital power rapidly declined. It is one thing to accept the Spirit's order, and pray Him to work in His own way; it is quite another to set up our order, and then pray Him to work according to our arrangement. Still, the effects of the great Revival remain amongst us, even to this day. These, we think, may be summed up under three heads: 1, the great increase in the number of prayer meetings; 2, the growing activity in gospel work from that time, both in preaching and the circulation of tracts; 3, a more general interest in the Lord's second coming. The midnight cry — "Behold the Bridegroom cometh" — has spread over the face of Christendom since 1859. We have no doubt that the cry was raised in the early part of this century, but the Revival gave it eagles' wings.

Everything has been moving with great rapidity, both in the church and the world, since that period, as if to hasten the coming of the Lord. This has been the century of invention, and of the display of man's energy, as if he were approaching the highest pinnacle of human fame before his final overthrow. (Isaiah 2) There is also great activity in every section of the professing church. We are in that period spoken of by the Lord in the parable (Matt. 25) — "Then ALL those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." None are asleep now. The foolish are professedly trimming their lamps as well as the wise. Hence the activity of evil in the church along with that which is unquestionably good. Ritualism, Rationalism, and open infidelity, have made rapid strides of late years, and all so mixed up with science and the world.

## CONCLUSION

Such alas! is the condition of what man and the world call the church at the close of our history. "The falling away" has commenced; "the strong delusion" may have set in; the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. The Christian, in these last and closing days, is only safe in keeping the Lord Himself constantly before him, and daily looking for His return. He must not trust or follow entirely any community of Christians; there are none of one heart and one mind in the Lord. But this need not prevent him from breaking bread with those who are gathered to His name. We only mean that his Christianity must be intensely personal, intensely individual. He must maintain a holy walk with the Lord, and uninterrupted communion with Himself, in separation from the swelling tide of evil which is rising on every side. When the darkness thickens, and troubles arise, the soul's only refuge is in the secret of His presence. Nations may be quarrelling, the cry of war may be coming from all quarters, calamities of the most overwhelming character may be happening daily in our midst, the professing church may be passing through the several stages of departure, as "the way of Cain,... the error of Balaam,... the gainsaying of Core;" but the soul's hiding-place from the strife of nations and the divisions of Christendom is the unchanging and unchangeable love of the ever-blessed and all-adorable Lord.

We must leave the reader to apply the principles of Philadelphia and Laodicea to the professing church of the present day, according to his spiritual judgment. The Philadelphian period has not passed away, but we must be on our guard against the spirit of Laodiceanism which is spreading rapidly among all classes of professing Christians.

May the good Lord keep both reader and writer near Himself until we see His face, hear His voice, and be for ever in the full enjoyment of His love and His glory. Amen.

A.M.