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## EDITORIAL NOTES

--Prof. H. Hanko--

You will find the final article in this issue of a series entitled "The Old And New Man In Scripture." We have also included a special article on the reformer Oecolampadius. This paper was originally written as a term paper for a course in Modern Church History. The editors considered it worthy of wider distribution. It was written by Mark Hoeksema, who has since graduated from our Seminary and is, at present, laboring in missionary work on the island of Jamaica.

Our readers will, we are sure, share with us the joy we have that the Lord has provided another professor for our Seminary. Prof. Robert Decker has already begun his labors in the school on a part-time basis, and hopes, the Lord willing, to begin full-time labors with the second semester. Prof. Decker was formerly the pastor of a Protestant Reformed congregation in South Holland, Illinois. Our readers can expect to see contributions from his pen in future issues of the Journal. In joining the faculty, he has also joined in the group of editors upon whom the main responsibility for the contents of this Journal falls. May God bless Prof. Decker's labors in our Theological School.

# THE OLD AND NEW MAN IN SCRIPTURE (III)

-- Prof. H. Hanko --

In the January, 1973 issue of the Reformed Journal there appears a short article by Lewis B. Smedes. He recalls reading of the exploits of Don Quixote in his former days, and recalls an incident in the life of this fictional character which serves as a jumping-off point for a dissertation on "abhorring ourselves." Don Quixote met a woman who was known in the village as a prostitute. The question was however, whether people treated her as such because she was a prostitute, or whether she turned to this kind of life because people treated her that way. Don Quixote saw in her however, a noble lady. She recognized this and began to live like one.

Smedes applies this little story in this way:

Is there a person anywhere who does not need his own Don Quixote? Everyone needs to be told that he is worth something, that there is something in him that is worth being. For we often cannot convince ourselves. We need to hear it from others. . .

I ask myself whether this is what my children read in my eyes. . . . I was told when they were baptized that I must teach them to "abhor themselves." That will do, given an understanding of what the writers of that ancient liturgy really meant. But in the only way that modern children would comprehend the phrase, I hope I have never given my children reason to "adhor themselves." I hope, instead, that they read "noble lady" in my eyes.

Not long ago I spent an evening with a small group of intelligent people who grew up in the Reformed community. All of them remembered one sad refrain from their upbringing. It was a refrain that could be titled Abhor Yourself. They remembered it as the major theme of their spiritual

rearing. And all of them had decided -- with a certain vengeance -- that they would sing it no more, nor would they sing it to their children, nor did they want to hear it sung to them. They were through with it.

How many of those who have left the Reformed community did so because the community said to them, with its eyes, you are unworthy, you are bad, you are unrelieved depravity? We cannot know for sure, of course. But I know there are some who have left because they discovered another community that. . . told them. . . that they were worth something. And because they were told that, they felt and acted as though they really were. . . .

We need not worry about knowledge of sin; nobody can understand his sin anyway unless he first understands his worth. . . .

I begin this article with this rather lengthy quotation because it precisely leads us to the heart of the subject we are discussing in this series of articles. This rather crass and blatantly un-Scriptural assertion is precisely the idea we were arguing against in the two articles which previously appeared in our Journal.

A brief statement of review is probably worth the time and effort to refresh the minds of our readers. (For the articles themselves, cf. Vol. V, No. 1 and Vol. VI, No. 1 of the Journal). The main subject of our discussion is the teaching of Scripture concerning the "old man" and the "new man". And, more particularly, we were facing the question whether Scripture gives us any grounds for asserting that the regenerated and sanctified Christian no longer possesses an "old man" -- as some have alleged. The argument of those who take this position is based, in the final analysis, on the use of the aorist tense in the passages of Scripture where the expressions "old man" and "new man" are found.

But we noticed too, that there were serious doctrinal implications in this question. We discussed how the errors of antinomianism and Arminianism were related to this question, and how

the whole question of perfectionism enters into the argument. In this connection, the passage in Romans 7: 13-25 is a key passage.

In the final analysis, we noticed that the debate centers in the work of sanctification. What is the nature of that work in the hearts and lives of the people of God? Granted that this work, sovereignly performed by God, results in the creation of the "new man", does this give us warrant for denying the existence of the "old man" in the sanctified believer?

In answering this question by a discussion of the pertinent Scriptural passages, we discussed Romans 6: 4-6 and discovered that this passage, taken in its context, teaches that, while the work of sanctification is a once-for-all work of God in the hearts and lives of God's people which results in the creation of the "new man", nevertheless, it is also a life-long process as well. And it is such because the "old man" is still also present in the child of God and this old man must daily be killed. While it is true that the "old man" is principally killed, it nevertheless must also daily be killed. And so we ended our last article with the statement:

We have not yet dealt with the question of what precisely is meant by the principle killing of the old man in distinction from this work of sanctification as it continues in the life of the child of God. This is an important question, but it shall have to wait, along with our treatment of the other texts, until the next issue of the Journal, D.V.

Let us then re-introduce <sup>\* \* \* \* \*</sup>our discussion with a few comments on the article of Lewis Smedes which is partially quoted at the beginning of this essay. Lewis Smedes says we must be done for all time with "abhorring ourselves." This thrust of his argument is that there is no reason why we should abhor ourselves. We are not what our fathers have always said we are. That is, we are not the kind of sinners which our Reformed creeds have insisted we are. We are not as bad as our liturgical forms claim. We are really "very good." And, by abhorring ourselves, we do grave injustice to ourselves.

Smedes is, of course, flying in the face of all our creeds and liturgy. One can almost quote at random. "Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness? Indeed we are; except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God." (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 8). "What believest thou concerning 'the forgiveness of sins?' That God, for the sake of Christ's satisfaction, will no more remember my sins, neither my corrupt nature, against which I have to struggle all my life long; but will graciously impute to me the righteousness of Christ, that I may never be condemned before the tribunal of God." (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 56). "Moreover, though we do good works, we do not found our salvation upon them; for we do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable; and although we could perform such works, still the remembrance of one sin is sufficient to make God reject them." (Belgic Confession, Art. XXIV). "Hence spring daily sins of infirmity, and hence spots adhere to the best works of the saints; which furnish them with constant matter for humiliation before God, and flying for refuge to Christ crucified; for mortifying the flesh more and more by the spirit of prayer, and by holy exercises of piety; and for pressing forward to the goal of perfection, till being at length delivered from this body of death, they are brought to reign with the Lamb of God in heaven." (Canons V, Art. 2). "We are admonished to loathe, and humble ourselves before God, and seek for our purification and salvation without ourselves." (Baptism form). "That every one consider by himself, his sins and the curse due to him for them, to the end that he may abhor and humble himself before God: considering that the wrath of God against sin is so great, that (rather than it should go unpunished) he hath punished the same in his beloved Son Jesus Christ, with the bitter and shameful death of the cross." (Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper).

And all this is an echo in the Church's confession of what Scripture itself says. David cried in anguish: "Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have

compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me." Psalm 40: 11, 12. "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Psalm 65: 2. After God finished speaking with Job, his response was: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Job 42: 5,6. Paul also speaks of himself as a wretched man and as the chief of sinners. Anyone with but a passing acquaintance with the Scriptures, knows that this is the theme which runs throughout the whole of the Word of God.

Smedes presents what comes perilously close to the arrogant prayer of the Pharisee: "I thank thee Lord that I am not as other men are. . . ."

To take less than this viewpoint of the regenerated and sanctified child of God is to refuse to take the Scriptures seriously. As true as it is that God makes His people, through the miracle of sanctification, new creatures, they remain sinners who indeed must and do "abhor themselves." And this is true because they are also old sinners: they have a new man, but also an old man.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let us continue with our examination of the pertinent passages of Scripture.

The second passage where these concepts are mentioned is found in Ephesians 4: 22-24:

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

We need not say too much about this passage since we have already discussed it in some detail in connection with our study of the Aorist tense in the Greek. (Cf. Journal, VI, 1, pp. 12-15).

We need only observe that Paul is not speaking here of something which has happened in the past but which need not and cannot happen again in the life of the Christian. After describing the former walk of the Ephesian Christians when they were still like the "other Gentiles," he reminds them that they have not so learned Christ. They have rather heard Christ and been taught by Christ that it is their calling to put off concerning the former conversation the old man and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. But it stands to reason, that if this is what they learned of Christ, and if this is then their calling, they, while in this present life, still possess the old man against which they must struggle. The saints are indeed "new men"; but this does not alter the fact that they are "old men" as well. And the work of sanctification goes on in their life continuously.

\* \* \* \* \*

The third passage in which the terms "old man" and "new man" are found is Col. 3: 9, 10. We quote the passage in its context.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image

of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

We may probably best get at the problem of this text by quoting at some length from Rev. H. Hoeksema's commentary on Colossians. (Published by the Theological School and available from the bookstore. It appears in mimeographed form.)

After having discussed the meaning and importance of the admonition: "Lie not one to another," Rev. Hoeksema goes on:

The apostle continues: ἀπεκδυσάμενοι τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ, putting off the old man and its practices, its deeds. The question arises, first of all, what is the relation between the participle, ἀπεκδυσάμενοι, and the following ἐνδυσάμενοι and the preceding admonitions. Do they denote the ground for the exhortations, or do they belong to those, expressing the mode in which the vices that are mentioned must be combatted and mortified? The Vulgate translates: expoliat, induentes, present participles, indicating therefore that it considers the participles as belonging to the admonitions. The German translation very definitely renders the text as conveying this same idea as the Vulgate: ziehet den alten Menschen mit seinen Werken aus; Und siehet den neuen an. On the other hand, however, the French translation renders with equal definiteness: Après avoir depouille le vieil homme avec ses oeuvres, et revetu le nouvel homme, -- "after having put off the old man with its works and put on the new man." The same is true of the English and Dutch translations. The question cannot be decided by a simple appeal to the aorist, seeing that this tense hardly expresses time, but rather emphasizes the action as such. (We underscore this sentence because it substantiates what we said about the aorist in a previous article. H.H.) However, we are in favor of the

English and French and Dutch rendering, on the following grounds: 1) If the apostle had intended to continue the admonition, he could and no doubt would have expressed this by using a finite form of the verbs, such as ἀπεκδύσασθε and ἐνδύσασθε. Thus it would be clearly indicated that he continued the exhortation, beginning in ἀπόθεσθε and μὴ ψεύδεσθε. 2) If by the participles the apostle intended to denote the mode of the ἀπόθεσθαι, which is hard to conceive, he most probably would have expressed the continued action this would imply by the present rather than by the aorist participles. 3) The aorist, considered by itself, may not be appealed to as opposed to the Vulgate rendering. (The underscoring is ours.) But as it follows the present ψεύδεσθε, it argues nevertheless in favor of the interpretation that conceives of this part of the text as a ground for the admonition. 4) It is hardly possible that the apostle would first mention various detailed sins of the old man, and then continue without even a word like καί or οὕτως, or a similar term, by mentioning the putting off of the very source and implication of all these sins, the old man and his deeds. We prefer, therefore to consider the participles as expressing the ground for the admonition. Once, that is, at the time of their regeneration and calling, they principally had put off the old man with his deeds. Hence, they are called and put in a position to put off the vices of that old man continuously.

The believers, therefore, are said to have put off the old man with his deeds. And, according to verse 10, they have put on the new man, καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον τὸν ἀνακατανούμενον.

The general meaning of this is evident. The new man is principally the regenerated, renewed, and

called believer, or Christian. He is new in a spiritual, ethical sense of the word. That the apostle uses the adjective νέος rather than καινός may probably suggest that with the Colossians this renewal was still of recent date. However, the participle, ἀνακαινούμενον, emphasizes the renewal as a qualitative change. This new man is different from the old man in a two-fold respect. He is holy and righteous, and he is born from above, and therefore, heavenly in principle. The old man is the natural man, born from below, earthly. And, besides, the old man is dead in trespasses and sins. He cannot serve and glorify God. He cannot do any good. The apostle speaks of the old man σὺν ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτοῦ, with his practices, or, with his deeds. The deeds of the old man are deeds of the flesh, and come forth from a common principle, enmity against God. Hence, they are evil πράξεις, -- a word that emphasizes that these deeds are constantly, uniformly, evil. They are evil practices, living and acting from the inner principle of enmity against God, the old, natural man practices evil, and is incapable of doing anything else than evil. The new man, however, is ἀνακαινούμενον εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν . . . .

The author then goes on to explain the rest of verse 10. It would seem from the above that Rev. Hoeksema supports the position that the regenerated child of God has put off the old man once for all. But such is not the case. The author goes on to say:

However, the question still remains: what concretely is meant by the old man and his works, and what is meant by the new man in the Christian? How can it be said of believers that they have put on the new man, and have put off the old man and

his works, while at the same time they are admonished to mortify their members which are upon the earth? Cf. vs. 5.

This shows that even after the new man was principally put on, and the old man was principally put off, they are both still present in a very real sense of the word in the Christian as he concretely exists in this world. Must we then come to the conclusion that the Christian is really a dual personality? Is he two persons in one,--the old and the new man,--that are fighting each other, and in such a way that the one is not responsible for the deeds of the other? In order to answer this question, we must note the following:

1) The terms old man and new man are, of course, not physical, neither psychological, but spiritual, ethical terms and concepts. And the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man denotes a spiritual, ethical act and a spiritual, ethical transformation. From a physical, psychological viewpoint, the Christian is the same before and after the change. He is one person in one nature, one mind, one will. And that one person is responsible for all his deeds.

2) When man is regenerated, it is his heart that is renewed. And the heart is the spiritual, ethical center of all his life. From his heart, according to Scripture, are the issues of life. He is ingrafted into Christ. Christ dwells in him by His Spirit. He is, therefore, principally and spiritually very really an entirely new man, standing in a new relation to God in Christ,--the relation of knowledge, the true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. And when this new principle of life hears and heeds and obeys the calling by the Holy Spirit through the Word of

God, the believer very really and once for all puts off the old man with his deeds, and puts on the new man. Principally he is an entirely new man. He is not old and new, but only new. He is entirely and principally unchangeably righteous in Christ, and assumed principally an entirely new attitude toward sin and righteousness. He condemns his own sin. He hates it, and repents, and by faith washes his garments in the blood of the Lamb. He is a new creature, according to II Cor. 5: 17. Old things have passed away; behold all things have become new. So that the believer in Christ Jesus is very really principally a new man, not an old man.

3) However, this does not mean that the Christian is already completely delivered from his old nature. On the contrary, that old nature, that is, his body and his soul, his mind and his will and all his emotions, is still inclined to sin. The ruts of sin are in that old nature. And that old nature never leaves him, but remains with him until the end of his days. Not until death, and finally until the resurrection, will that old nature be destroyed, and the new man shine forth in all its glory and power. The motions of sin, the old ruts of sin do not depart from the nature of the Christian; but they are in his mind and will, in his body and soul. Now as the person of the believer expresses himself, is conscious of and responsible for the deeds of the old nature, he is still the old man. But as this same person,--not another one--lives from his regenerated heart by faith, out of Christ, hates the works of darkness, and has delight in God and in all righteousness and holiness, he is the new man. Hence, there is a constant struggle to put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which is created after God in true knowledge,

righteousness, and holiness.

Thus this text as well as the others teach exactly the opposite from the opinion that we have here proof for the fact that the old man no longer exists in the Christian. It is just because there is present this old man that the Scriptures so often present the life of the child of God as a struggle. This is, e.g., the teaching of Paul in Gal. 5: 16-26:

This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

It is also this conflict then of which the apostle speaks in the last verses of Romans 7 which prompts him to cry out: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But even then there is victory: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

\* \* \* \* \*

All of this brings us to the heart of the issue of sanctification.

As we noticed in an earlier part of this essay, there are errors to be avoided. There is, on the one hand, the error of antinomianism which simply excuses sin as part of the old man for which the sinner himself takes no responsibility. There is, on the other hand, the error of perfectionism. This is the error into which Arminianism usually falls. It is not difficult to see why this should be so. Arminianism, with its emphasis on the free will of man, simply refuses to take sin seriously. It fails to recognize the fact that sin is, after all, rooted in a totally depraved and corrupt nature. It speaks of sin almost exclusively as being in the deeds of a man. The same thing is true of perfectionism.. It does not take the reality of sin, especially from the viewpoint of the depravity of the nature, in all the seriousness with which it ought to be taken.

And it is precisely in this matter of the nature that the concepts of old and new man become so important.

What does Scripture mean when it speaks of these terms?

Without going into detail concerning this question, we must remember that Scripture speaks of man in a very complex way. While it is certainly true that man is a unity who cannot be chopped into pieces, nevertheless Scripture speaks of man as possessing body, soul and spirit as well as person and heart. Or, from a different point of view, Scripture speaks of the nature of man by which is evidently meant his entire being including body, soul, mind, will, affections, etc. Scripture makes it quite clear that when the work of regeneration and sanctification is performed by God in His people, this work takes place in the heart. If we remember that the "heart" is not a physical, much less a psychological concept, but a spiritual and ethical concept, then it becomes plain that the regeneration of the heart is a principle and fundamental change which God works in the deepest ethical part of man's being so that his entire life is basically and fundamentally altered.

While I do not think that Scripture gives us any warrant for saying that the mind and the will, the affections and the body, are regenerated, nevertheless, the power of the new life of Christ worked in regeneration affect powerfully the whole nature of the

child of God. Our Canons of Dordt, e.g., speak of a powerful illumination of the mind by the Holy Spirit so that the child of God may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; an opening of the closed; a softening of the hardened heart, an infusion of new qualities into the will which though once dead is quickened. 'Canons III & IV., 11, And it can only be because the powerful influences of the regenerated heart affect also the body that Paul can admonish the people of God not to yield their members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. Cf. Rom. 6: 13.

This then is what Scripture calls the new man. It is the renewal of the heart by the powerful and quickening work of the Holy Spirit in the elect child of God; and it includes the powerful influences of that new principle of life upon the whole of the child of God's nature. It is the creation of the new man which is holy and free from guilt, washed in the blood of Christ, under the dominion of grace, set in the direction of things heavenly from which springs all the sanctified walk of the child of God. But the child of God himself is that new man, for this whole work of grace cannot be separated from our persons. We are indeed new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Nevertheless, this is a principle work which is not fully accomplished in this present world. We are not freed from sin until we die and go to glory, and the final regeneration of our bodies does not take place until the final resurrection. Hence Scripture speaks also of the old man in the believer.

It is interesting to note that the term "old man" is always applied in Scripture only to the regenerated and sanctified believer. In other words, only the regenerated child of God can properly be said to possess an old man. This cannot be said of the unbeliever. Though he be totally depraved, corrupt in all his nature, dead in trespasses and sins, he is not properly described as possessing an old man. The term "old man" always stands in contrast with the "new man" and therefore belongs to the regenerated Christian only.

What is this "old man" in the believer of which Scripture speaks?

It must not be construed simply as "indwelling sin." There is much indwelling sin in the life of the child of God, of course. But this expression is altogether inadequate to explain the term. Its chief weakness is that it fails to take account of the nature of the Christian which is still corrupt and depraved. Nor is it correct and adequate to speak of the "old man" as an old "life-style." This is a superficial explanation of the term and wholly out of keeping with the Scriptures.

But at the same time we must not fall into the error of antinomianism and somehow construe the "old man" to be something apart from us personally. There is sometimes a tendency of some to do this. They speak of the old man in them as if he is someone (or something) apart from them. It is, as it were, someone whom they hold at arm's length and accuse severely of sinning. These people will usually speak of themselves as being very near to perfection--if not having already attained. They are then referring to themselves personally as they exist concretely in the world. But the "old man" is someone foreign, no longer themselves, a wretch of a person, responsible for all the sin which is still to be found in their lives. So complete do they make the separation, and so far do they press the point that the old man cannot be equated with them personally, that they engage in all sorts of sins which are quickly blamed upon their old man, while they remain personally unresponsive for them before the face of God. They will quote as proof for this contention the words of the apostle Paul in Rom. 7: 20: "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." They forget, rather conveniently, that the same apostle speaks in this passage of the fact that he does evil: "the evil which I would not, that I do." (vs. 19). And they cannot appeal to Paul in support of their efforts to excuse themselves for the sins which they still commit.

It is evident that the child of God is far from perfect--not only as far as his outward conduct is concerned, but also as far as his nature is concerned. For one thing, the regenerated child of God lives in the world as yet. He is part of this creation in

which dwells the curse. He is still required to live his life in the midst of ungodly men and walk in his pilgrimage in a foreign land where there is untold evil and corruption. It is no wonder then that he is influenced from outside himself with forces of evil which impinge upon him constantly. He is every moment bombarded with the sins of the crooked and perverse generation in which he passes the years of his sojourn.

In the second place, he himself has not yet been perfected. When he fell in Adam, his whole nature, body and soul, became dead in trespasses and sins. This corrupt nature has been carried by the human race and transmitted to each member of it over a period of thousands of years. The ruts and tendencies of sin are very deep and very strong. Even though he is regenerated, this regeneration does not embrace the whole of his nature so that the whole of his nature has been renewed. Then the child of God would be in heaven. His body even would be transformed into the likeness of the glorified body of Christ. But this has not yet happened. Although, as we noticed above, the influences of regeneration are very strong throughout his entire nature, yet the influences of sin are also present. Though his mind is enlightened, there is much of darkness in his mind as yet. And the result is that this part of his nature also is still corrupted. There is fertile ground in that mind for innumerable evil thoughts, memories, schemings, planning, reasonings. His will is renewed so that he loves the good and seeks the things which are above. But it even remains a fact that, by the influences of a will, long accustomed to sin and still corrupt in many respects, he chooses for sin. And he does this in the complete awareness that he is sinning. He does not do so in ignorance. He does not set his desires and affections upon evil things impelled against his will. His will too, still remains sinful in large measure. And so it is with all his inner life. No child of God who understands himself will ever claim that he has approached perfection in all the rich and varied life which is, so to speak, below the level of the outward conduct by which he is seen of men. His life too, is like the iceberg, some 70% of which is outside of men's discovery and which is known only to him

and his God. And here lurks untold evil and terrible violence and filth. Here is sin which will only be uncovered in the day of judgment.

And so also the body of the regenerated child of God is still in many ways an instrument of sin. Serving his mind and will, his body still speaks the evil at times and does not perfectly heed the commandment of his God to speak the truth in love. His hands become yet instruments of unrighteousness and evil. His body is still put to the use of sinful conduct. And so his whole nature is still very much sinful in all its parts. We are not speaking of the ungodly man; we are speaking of the regenerated child of God. There, in the Christian, still lurk the devils of doubt and unbelief, of hatred and envy, of lust and passion, of covetousness and idolatry.

The Scriptures themselves teach us that this is so. The Scriptures would not, in a thousand ways and by innumerable injunctions and admonitions call the believer from these sins if they were no longer present in us. But this also is the teaching of our Confessions which have so beautifully caught the teaching of Scripture at this point. We have quoted many of these passages already. We refer only to a couple from our Heidelberg Catechism. "But can those who are converted to God perfectly keep these commandments? No: but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience; yet so, that with a sincere resolution they begin to live, not only according to some, but all the commandments of God. Why will God then have the ten commandments so strictly preached, since no man in this life can keep them? First, that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin, and righteousness in Christ; likewise, that we constantly endeavor and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us, in a life to come." Lord's Day XLIV, 114, 115.

This is also the experience of the child of God. While it is true that the experience of the Christian may never form the

standard of the truth, nor the basis for our conclusions on points of doctrine, nevertheless it is also true that the truths of the Scriptures are, by the operation of the Spirit, reflected in the consciousness of the believing saint. And the result is certainly that the child of God whose eyes have been opened by the influences of grace knows himself as the wretched sinner that he is. If therefore, one should come to him and tell him that he sins only occasionally, that he is basically very close to perfection, that he need not "abhor himself", that sin has been destroyed in him, such a man not only confuses the child of God but will do one of two things. He will either create in him the self-righteous spirit of the Pharisee and lead him away from humbling himself daily before the fact of God; or he will rob the child of God of all his assurance of forgiveness and pardon in the blood of Christ. He will make such a child of God wonder whether indeed he can be a Christian since his own life is quite different from the false standard of holiness and the false norm of the regenerated Christian presented to him. He will see that there is much sin in him yet, that his nature indeed is still corrupted and polluted; and this will have the effect of persuading him that he is not even a regenerated child of God. So do those who make light of the reality of sin in the Christian rob the child of God of his assurance in Christ.

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All this means that there is conflict in the life of the Christian: bitter, unrelenting warfare. There is a struggle which goes on continuously, a fight which, at times, all but tears the child of God to pieces. It is a war without cessation, without truce, without periods of surcease from the struggle, without compromise. And it goes on exactly within the very life of the Christian himself. There is the Christian from the viewpoint of his being a new man in Christ who hates sin, flees from it, despises all that is unholy: a new man washed clean in Christ's blood, freed from all spot and stain, with heart and affections centered in God and His Word. But there is also the Christian from the viewpoint of his being an "old man" who still loves sin very much,

presses it to his heart, seeks it out, pursues it with single minded fanaticism and schemes and plots to commit every manner of evil there is. The Christian is both of these--both of these the same time and all the time. The good that he would he does not, and the evil that he would not, that he does. Oh, wretched man that he is.

It is even, in the final analysis, this precise conflict which makes the child of God long for his heavenly home. He grows weary of the struggle and desperately tired of the unceasing battle. He knows that it shall continue all his life and he knows that there is not peace complete and perfect to be found until he is, body and soul, renewed in the house of his Father. He becomes very tired of sinning, confessing his sin and committing the same sins over and over again. He becomes unspeakably weary of his constant failure to do the will of his heavenly Father. And he longs for the time when he shall finally "be presented without spot or wrinkle in the assembly of the elect in life eternal."

But does all this mean that the battle is uncertain as far as its outcome is concerned? Have we said enough when we describe the Christian in terms of this struggle? Does Scripture say no more than that this conflict goes on and on without any decision until death? This is far from true.

The Scriptures always speak in terms of victory. There is a note of triumph running throughout the Word of God in all this. That is, the Scriptures do not leave the child of God in his desperate struggle to await victory when he goes to heaven only. The life of the child of God is not comparable to a battle between opposing armies in which the outcome always remains uncertain until the very last moment. In the midst of the battle between the old and the new man, Scripture constantly reminds us that we are victorious. Not only when finally we die; but every moment. The new man always has the victory. This is true every moment of the struggle.

It may not seem that way oftentimes to the child of God. He may see only darkness and defeat in his life. He may see the superiority of the power and strength of the old man. He may come

to the conclusion that almost always this old man is dominant and that there is very little strength and power in the new man. But any such conclusions on his part would be erroneous. The Scriptures are quite emphatic on this point. The believer is after all, "dead to sin." (Rom. 6: 11). Sin has no more dominion over him. (Rom. 6: 14). We are no longer the servants of sin, but are freed from sin and have become servants of righteousness. (Rom. 6: 17, 18). We are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us. (Rom. 8: 37). And these passages could be multiplied.

The point is that even on the battlefield there is victory and triumph. And we must not lose sight of this. The new man always has the victory. The new man always conquers over the old man. This is because the new man is the creation of God Almighty worked powerfully through grace and by the Holy Spirit. And that grace of God is greater than all our sin.

But the question is: How can we explain that?

The following considerations will make that clear.

1) By the work of grace whereby the new man is created, the power and dominion of sin is broken so that we are no longer the slaves of sin. This is formerly what we were. We were sin's slaves--completely. We were so completely slaves of sin that every activity of our nature was totally in the service of sin. Sin ruled in us. Sin ruled even over our wills so that our wills were subject to the slavery of sin and so that we were incapable of even willing good. We, willingly, eagerly, desperately, totally, sought the service of sin. This is all ended. Sin's dominion over us is completely broken. We are, in the words of Scripture, dead to sin. We are freed from sin's tyranny. And this is complete and final. We are now the servants of God and the power of grace rules in our lives through the Holy Spirit.

2) This comes to concrete manifestation in the life of the child of God. He wills the good. He desires earnestly and sometimes passionately to do the will of God. He loves that which is good and hates that which is evil. He does this even when he sins. He hates what he does and disapproves of that which still he commits. There is conflict here too, of course; he still loves also

evil and approves of it. But fundamentally and principally he hates all this. So much does he hate the evil that he abhors and despises himself for committing evil. He cries out: "O wretched man that I am." This is the power of grace and the domination of the Spirit of Christ. Without the power of that new man he would never be able even to see that he is a sinner; he would be blind to his own depravity; he would be totally oblivious to his own utter wretchedness, for pride blinds his eyes and leads him to false conclusions about himself. Apart from grace he would love sin. But now he loves it no longer--even when he commits it.

Not only that, but far more important even, he confesses his sin. This is a tremendous victory of grace in his life which is too often taken for granted and shrugged aside as unimportant. But there is perhaps no more powerful manifestation of the new man in him than this. The Scriptures reiterate repeatedly the importance of confession of sin. So important is this considered to be that Scripture even makes it the one distinguishing mark of the Christian. No one who is not sorry for sin can enter heaven. Only those who confess their sins and flee to the cross shall find forgiveness and pardon. But all those who come shall be saved.

You can understand why this is so important. The two hardest words in the English language to say are: "I'm sorry." Sin means exactly excusing sin, justifying one's self, blaming others for sin. But the power of grace is so great that it changes all this in the lives of the people of God. It creates a hatred against sin that arises out of the conviction that we have offended the most high God with our offenses. The new man is so hateful of sin and so disgusted with its horror that he confesses. He humbles himself before God in dust and ashes. He comes with a broken and a contrite spirit before the most High solemnly to plead God's mercy. He sees with stark clarity his own worthlessness and powerlessness. He sees he is wholly a sinner, wholly in need of grace and mercy, dependent utterly upon the God of his salvation. And in the agony of his sin, he flees for a refuge to the cross there to find forgiveness and pardon and to drink deeply of the cup of mercy.

This is a complete and total victory over sin. It is the tremendous power of the work of grace which overcomes utterly the old man and crushes him. It is so great a victory that it brings peace and joy, happiness and thanksgiving in the midst of suffering and distress. Let no one underevaluate the tremendous power of this victory of the new man in the life of the child of God.

3) Finally, it leads to growth in sanctification. The victory is so complete that the new man more and more dominates in the life of the child of God.

We must be careful that we understand this correctly. I recall when I was a young man that our Young Men's Society instituted a program in the church where I was a member of bringing the recorded sermons to the shut-ins of the congregation. This is a common program now in many churches, but we were walking on new ground in the days when the only recorders available were wire. Especially the older people loved to have us stay with them for awhile to talk to them and keep them company in their loneliness. Many of them would very soon turn the discussion to spiritual things. In my young eyes, these people were as near to sainthood as it was possible to get. They seemed to have all but attained perfection as their whole lives were testimonies of the power of grace. But when we would talk about these things, they would solemnly assure me that the older they became, the greater sinners they were. I was very much taken aback by this, and if it had not been their unanimous testimony (for there was no exception), I would have passed it off as being a too-modest evaluation of their spiritual life.

However, the older I myself become, the more I can appreciate the truth of what these people said.

Is it true then that there is no progress in sanctification? that, on the contrary, one may only, as these people testified, get worse? What is the solution to this problem?

To understand this, we must understand the paradox of the Christian's life. I am afraid that only a child of God is able to understand this; it probably seems nonsense to the unbeliever. Yet every child of God knows how true it is.

For one thing, of course, the older one becomes the more of a lifetime of sin he has to look back on. He does not carry with him twenty or thirty years of sinning, but seventy or eighty. And while it is true that when we confess our sins, we find forgiveness and pardon, nevertheless, in a certain sense we carry our sins with us all our life long. David must have been a relatively older man already when he prayed: "Forgive the sins of my youth." They are forgiven, but they are there, for they have had their effect upon our lives which nothing on this side of the grave can erase. And the older we become, the more of these sins have piled up and the greater the mountain of their guilt. The accumulated effects of them are very great.

In the second place, the older we become the wiser we become in the ways of sin. A child, though a sinner, is openly and blatantly sinful. With the passing of the years comes a certain skill in sin, a certain carefulness and slyness which makes sin more terrible and more hypocritical. We learn to fake holiness, to sin in undetected ways, to fool others. And this opens up more possibilities for sin not only, but also increases their gravity. And we know this.

In the third place, with age comes greater opportunities for sin. We learn to sin with our earthly possessions, something we did not have as a child. We sin in our positions of responsibility in the home, in the Church of Christ, in the places God puts us in relation to others in society. But all these things make sin greater and more heinous. Along with this comes an increasing knowledge of sin as sin. We do not sin in the ignorance of childhood, but in the full awareness of the truth of the Scriptures and the commands of God's law. This increases our responsibility and the gravity of sin.

In the fourth place, subjectively, we learn all these things more deeply and profoundly. We learn how horrible sin really is. We learn what a terrible monster it is in our lives. We learn how serious sin is because it is committed against the most high majesty of God. We learn how evil we are, the deep capacity for sin we have, the possibility of committing every sin, no matter how vile.

We learn how powerful our natures really are dead in sin and trespasses. And we come more and more to hate these sins.

All these things leave the impression with us as if, the older we become the greater sinners we really are. And in a certain sense this is true.

But at the same time, these very things are all the fruit of grace. The Heidelberg Catechism says that the ten commandments must be preached to us because then we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sins and righteousness in Christ. And so we have the paradox of the Christian. The greater understanding of our sinful natures leads us to an increasing awareness of ourselves as sinners. We understand, the older we become, that we are utterly wretched. But this is, at the same time, the victory of grace and of the new man in Christ. We cannot see our sins apart from grace. We cannot understand their power in our lives except we be regenerated. We cannot confess them and flee for forgiveness to our Christ but by the power of the new man. So that very thing which convinces us that we become increasingly greater sinners is itself the growth of sanctification and progress on the way to holiness.

And so, finally, we more and more earnestly desire to live, "not according to only some, but all the commandments of God." And that earnest desire grows greater and greater. And as it grows, so by the power of that same grace which makes it grow, we put away, one by one the sins which continuously rise up in our lives. Grace conquers sin. The new man is victorious. Oh, indeed, not here in this life. We pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit, "that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us, in a life to come."

And this is the note of triumph which rings throughout the Scriptures. It sounds as a victory shout on every page. It arises in every part of God's Word as the victory shout of the child of God in the midst of the world because he is more than a conqueror through Christ Who loved him.

The old man and the new man; yes, indeed. Both are there. But victory is a present reality and a certain hope.

# OECOLAMPADIUS, REFORMER OF BASEL

## His Life and Work

-- Mark Hoeksema --

### INTRODUCTION

Basel in the 16th century was the wealthiest and most literary city in all of Switzerland. It had been an episcopal see since the 8th century, the meeting place of the reformatory council of 1430-1448, and the seat of a university since 1460. Located on the banks of the Rhine in extreme northwest Switzerland, it bordered on both France and Germany, and consequently its history was influenced by that of both countries. It was the center of the Swiss book trade, and a meeting-place for scholars from all over the world. Enriched by trade and commerce, the city was a leading influence among the thirteen Swiss cantons. The spiritual climate in the 1500's was one of unrest, for the winds of change were blowing strongly among the stolid Swiss. The first gusts were sent swirling into the city by the scholars Wyttenbach and Erasmus, and soon the populace, under the influence of the preachers Capito and Hedio, was demanding reform.<sup>1</sup>

Into this situation Oecolampadius, stepped. The Reformer of Basel established the Reformation firmly, consolidated it and furthered it. Called by some a secondary reformer,<sup>2</sup> he is such only in the sense that he belongs to the second generation of reformers. But in his learning, views, and work he was by no means secondary, but a servant of God of the first class and a great reformer of the church. How Oecolampadius came to be a reformer, what he accomplished in Basel, his views and teachings, and his lasting mark upon the history of the church are the subjects that occupy our

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<sup>1</sup>Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids, 1958), Vol. VIII, pp. 107-108.

<sup>2</sup>Gordon Rupp, Paternalism of Reformation (London, 1969), p. ix.

attention in the paper. Though somewhat artificial, for the sake of clarity three distinctions should be made. We consider first the life and character of Oecolampadius; second, his major views; and third, his place in the history of the Reformation.

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## OECOLAMPADIUS: HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER

Oecolampadius was born Johann Hausschein in the small town of Weinsberg in Württemberg in the year 1482. His mother, a native of Basel, and his father, a merchant, educated their son for the legal profession.<sup>3</sup> He seemed to have a penchant for learning, for after attending the Latin school at Heilbronn he entered the University of Bologna, and then the University of Heidelberg, where he earned his B.A. in 1502 and his M.A. in 1503.<sup>4</sup> Having decided he did not like jurisprudence, young Hausschein instead chose theology, which he studied at Heidelberg. He received a traditional Roman Catholic education, studying Aquinas, the mystics, and the classics.<sup>5</sup> Yet these were times of turmoil in education, for traditional views and values were being questioned. Thus Oecolampadius stood temporally between the old humanists such as Wimpfeling and Reuchlin and the van of the new rebellion, which included such figures as Melanchthon, Brenz, and Bucer.<sup>6</sup>

The turmoil of the age was reflected in the life of the young Hausschein. He seemingly was unable to find his calling in life, wandering from place to place and finding various temporary occupations during the next several years of his life. In 1506 he became tutor to the son of the Elector Philip of Heidelberg, but it seemed that court life did not agree with him,<sup>7</sup> and he soon returned to Heidelberg. In 1510 he was appointed town preacher through a benefice of his family. At the same time he began to use the Grecized form of his name, Oecolampadius, though Rupp informs us that his enemies later called him "Caeco-lampadius" ("dark-lamp"); the

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<sup>3</sup>McClinton-Strong, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, (New York, 1877), Vol. VII, p. 303.

<sup>4</sup>Rupp, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Schaff-Herzog, Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (London, 1910) p. 222.

<sup>6</sup>Rupp, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

inhabitants of Basel, his later home, unable to pronounce such a moniker, called him "Claus Bader" (Nick-out-of-the-bath").<sup>8</sup> His preaching at this time was thoroughly Roman Catholic and scholastically medieval in character;<sup>9</sup> yet there were elements of mysticism and stresses similar to those of Staupitz and Karlstadt.<sup>10</sup> However, whether it was due to a feeling of incompetence, or whether it was because he was convinced that the doctrines he preached were only superstition, as Wylie holds, he soon resigned his position to resume his studies. Perhaps there is truth in the assertion that Oecolampadius was discontented with Roman Catholic doctrine and therefore decided to study the Scriptures in the original languages, although this cannot be proved.

At any rate, study the sacred languages he did at Tübingen. Here he met Philip Melanchthon, and through him Melanchthon's great-uncle, the famous linguist Reuchlin.<sup>11</sup> From Reuchlin he learned Greek and Hebrew, as well as Latin. Such a wide knowledge of languages was rare in his day and consequently his learning brought him renown as a linguistic scholar. Soon Oecolampadius put his knowledge to practical use, returning to Heidelberg and teaching Greek with a grammar which he wrote himself.<sup>12</sup>

It was at this time that he met Capito, who had an immediate influence on him. Capito had gone to Basel and secured from Bishop Uttenheim of Basel an appointment for Oecolampadius to preach in Basel, which Oecolampadius accepted in 1515.<sup>13</sup> In addition to preaching there, he assisted Erasmus in the preparation of the latter's Commentary of the New Testament,<sup>14</sup> a labor for which

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>9</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 303.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>J.A.Wylie, The History of Protestantism (London, n.d.), p. 428.

<sup>14</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 303.

he was well qualified in the original languages and because of which he was greatly appreciated by Erasmus. (Oecolampadius did not neglect his preaching, however, speaking in favor of the purity of the Christian life and against abuses in the Roman Catholic Church, though his intention was not in any way a break with Rome; it was rather his intention to reform it from within.) But whether because of poor health or because his preaching was not popular, as Rupp suggests, he returned to his home town of Weinsberg and went into partial retirement.

In Weinsberg he pursued his private studies, preached occasionally, and corresponded with Luther and Melancthon, whose thinking was influencing him.<sup>15</sup> About this time he preached a sermon, De Risu paschali, later published as a pamphlet, in which Oecolampadius attacked the levity and frivolity associated with the celebration of Easter.<sup>16</sup> (Also during this time he began a study of the church fathers of the early period, a study which he pursued through the rest of his life; the knowledge of the fathers proved to be of much help to him in later conflicts, and he indeed possessed a good knowledge of them, for he translated the works of several.)

The year 1518 found him again in Basel at Erasmus' request. He once again gave his aid to Erasmus, was appointed cathedral preacher, and received his D.D. in Basel, as well as translating the fathers, especially Gregory of Naziazen.<sup>17</sup> Yet Oecolampadius was still unsettled; Adelmann called him "Home inconstans," and Oecolampadius himself complained about his work as being like a treadmill.<sup>18</sup>

Soon he removed to Augsburg, where he met Luther and was "instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly," to use his own words.<sup>19</sup> He evidently adopted Luther's doctrine of justifica-

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<sup>15</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 304.

<sup>16</sup>Rupp, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>19</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 304

tion, and defended the basic Reformation doctrines in his Canonici Indocti, which he published anonymously with his friend Adelmann.<sup>20</sup> Oecolampadius was being led step by step by God through this period of personal restlessness and wandering to the truths of the Reformation. However, he was by no means a Reformer at this time; he was still a loyal son of the Roman Catholic Church, as is evidenced by his next move.

Suddenly in 1520 or 1521 (there is disagreement over the date) without consulting or informing even his best friends, he entered the monastery of Altenmünster near Augsburg, hoping to find peace of soul and an opportunity to study in solitude. But if Oecolampadius sought peace of soul and quietude at Altenmünster, he was soon sorely disillusioned, for he carried with him into seclusion the doctrines of Martin Luther and their inevitable consequences. These consequences soon became plain to him. Though he was treated with respect and given extraordinary liberty by the monks, he soon got himself into trouble. He spoke out against the practice of the adoration of the Virgin, which he himself had vigorously proclaimed in his early ministry at Weinsberg; he attacked the "Rule of the Savior" governing the monastery; he criticized confession, saying that it was unnecessary because God alone and not the priest had the power to absolve from sin; he even denied transubstantiation.<sup>21</sup> All of this, of course, did not make him exactly the favorite of the other monks, who began to make trouble for him. When rumors of his arrest began floating through the air, Oecolampadius reminded the monks of their right to expel a member of the convent to avoid the contagion of heresy and asked them to regard him as highly contagious, which they obligingly did.<sup>22</sup> He left the monastery and went to the castle of Franz von Sickingen in Ebernburg in 1522.

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 304.

<sup>22</sup>Rupp., p.17.

During his short stay at Ebernburg he introduced the vernacular into the Mass and into Scripture readings,<sup>23</sup> as well as preaching on weekdays and affirming that the church must be reformed on the basis of the Word of God.<sup>24</sup> By reading Luther's writing he became more convinced of this need for reform, and attacked transubstantiation, Mariolatry, and confession, which endeared him to Luther.<sup>25</sup> But life in the castle was not conducive to quiet study, and after only about six months he accepted an invitation to work for Cratander the printer in Basel, where he came into contact with Zwingli in 1522 and began his real work of reform in Basel, his home for the rest of his days.

Strictly speaking, Oecolampadius did not begin the Reformation in Basel, though in a broader sense he did. Before he came there his friend Capito had been instrumental in the overthrow of the government of the nobility and the instigation of democratic reforms whereby the people freed themselves from the secular power of the bishop. After Capito had come Roubli, who attacked many Roman Catholic abuses, such as the mass, purgatory, and the worship of saints. Though the people supported him the clergy took care that he was banished from the city in 1522, just before Oecolampadius came there.<sup>26</sup> Thus the Reformation had already begun in Basel in the sense that the mood and climate for the Reformation were present; but the city was still definitely Roman Catholic and there had been no real reform. The way had been prepared and it was the work of Oecolampadius, though he did not know it at the time, to bring true reformation and a break with the Roman Catholic Church to Basel.

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<sup>23</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 304.

<sup>24</sup>Schaff-Herzog, p. 222.

<sup>25</sup>Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids, 1958), Vol. VIII, p. 110.

<sup>26</sup>Schaff-Herzog, p. 223.

The reformer did not get off to a particularly auspicious start, however; for although the people generally welcomed him, the priests and professors looked askance at this monk who had renounced his vows.<sup>27</sup> He received no professorship, and for more than a year was without a job. Then he began to teach in the university (which he as doctor had a right to do), though outside of the walls of the school.

Soon he was appointed to a vacant professorship in the university and began lecturing on Isaiah. He often spoke in German, and the people flocked to hear his expositions of the prophet.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps buoyed by this evidence of popular support, Oecolampadius began to attack the Romish Church violently in the course of these lectures. When speaking on Isaiah 5: 11, for instance, he said:

In our time the church has preferred the traditions of men to the Word of God and has fallen back beneath the yoke of the law.....Nothing so blinds us to the grace of Jesus Christ as these satisfactions (of Catholic observances). Our works are not acts of expiation but the fruits of regeneration, and we perform them not so much because the law commands us as because the Spirit moves us.<sup>29</sup>

By the time he reached Chapter 10 his attack had become yet more scathing:

These words (vss. 13,ff.) apply perfectly to the Antichrist. He, too, boasts of possessing the two keys, of power and of knowledge. He lays claim to unlimited power and believes himself wise to the point of being infallible and incapable of sin. He makes arbitrary changes in the boundaries between peoples and distributes as he pleases kingdoms, patriarchates, bishoprics and parishes. To gain control of this world's goods, he has devised all manner of expedients: prohibitions relating to marriage and food, dispensations, indulgences, reserved sins, excommunication.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 304.

<sup>28</sup>Rupp, p. 19.

<sup>29</sup>Emile Leonard, A History of Protestantism (London, 1965), Vol. I, p. 149.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

Besides his academic position he was appointed curate of St. Martin's in Basel, from which pulpit he continued to denounce Roman Catholic abuses, telling the people he had to be allowed freedom to preach the Word without being bound by "useless and pernicious ceremonies." He spoke out against the celibacy of the clergy, and soon had the city in an uproar.<sup>31</sup>

It is not difficult to perceive that Oecolampadius was already heading for a complete break with the Catholic Church. He had at this point broken with the church in his own mind and soul, as is evident from his teachings, and was fast approaching an open break with Rome. He had placed himself on the side of the Reformers and was now ready to take a public stand and issue a challenge to the church.

The challenge took the form of an academic disputation on four theses prepared by Oecolampadius. This method of public disputation was being used successfully by Zwingli for the establishment of the Reformation in Zurich, and Oecolampadius followed his example in Basel. He had by this time come, through correspondence, under the influence of Zwingli and moved away from his earlier association with Luther, to the latter's disgust. The theses were approved by the town council for debate, and in 1523 the propositions were disputed. Oecolampadius held: 1) The prime authority of Christ, in comparison with which the teachings of the philosophers and doctors are contemptible; 2) Justification by faith; 3) Rejection of the invocation of saints; 4) All Christians are "brothers, priests, and kings."<sup>32</sup> This disputation, which Oecolampadius won over the Roman Catholics, resulted in a decree of the council which proclaimed the free preaching of the gospel, but did not express support for the Reformation.<sup>33</sup> Emboldened, Oecolampadius continued his work at St. Martin's, introducing the German language in baptism, abolishing useless ceremonies, and beginning

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<sup>31</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 304.

<sup>32</sup>Rupp, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup>Schaff-Herzog, p. 223.

the use of German songs.<sup>34</sup> The Reformation was beginning to make progress in Basel!

But controversy was brewing in the Reformation internally, and the issue in 1524 was the doctrine of the Eucharist. Exactly what Oecolampadius' position had been previous to this we do not know with certainty, but already in 1524 he leaned toward holding to the spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. He read a letter of the Dutch Reformer Hoen intended for Zwingli, which held to the spiritual character of the symbols, and guardedly took this position himself.<sup>35</sup> Though we do not know for certain, it is possible that he met with Zwingli to discuss the question.<sup>36</sup> Whether this is true or not, Oecolampadius did adopt Zwingli's position for a time and defended it against the Roman Catholics and Lutherans. In defense of his stance he published in 1525 the treatise, De genuina verborum Domini: "Hoc est corpus meum" juxta vetustissimos autores expositione liber.<sup>37</sup> This treatise did not produce the hoped for agreement, and the verbal battle between the Lutherans and Zwinglians became sharp and bitter.<sup>38</sup> Thus Oecolampadius' first attempt at mediating the dispute failed.

About this same time the Romanists began to reassert themselves. John Eck, who, as Rupp puts it (p. 28), "seems to have felt himself the holder of the European title for verbal prize-fighting," challenged the Reformers to a debate which was set to occur in Baden in 1526. The setting was overwhelmingly Catholic, and the city fathers of Zurich refused to allow Zwingli to endanger himself by participating. The lot thus fell upon Oecolampadius. When he and the Basel pastors arrived, they were outmaneuvered, outraged, and outgunned by the Catholics.<sup>39</sup> But Oecolampadius

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Rupp, p. 23.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 25

<sup>38</sup>Schaff-Herzog, p. 224.

<sup>39</sup>Rupp, p. 29

in his quiet way debated the theatrical and boisterous Eck; he lost formally, but this did not hurt the Reformation cause very much, because the debate was obviously rigged in favor of the Roman Catholics.

If the Romish hoped to end the Reformation they were sadly mistaken. In 1527 the council of Basel decreed that participation in the mass was a matter of individual choice. But even this was not good enough for the populace. The Reformation had been formally introduced in Bern, mainly through the Bern Colloquy of 1528, in which Oecolampadius took part, helping to rout the Romish thoroughly. Now the people of Basel wanted the same thing. They took matters into their own hands and destroyed pictures in the Catholic churches. Though the uprising was quickly squashed by the authorities, discontent continued and insurrection broke out with the threat of war between the Reformed and Romish. The Protestants demanded removal of the Roman Catholics from the clergy and the council and backed up their demands by rioting. The council had no real choice in the matter; they gave in to the large Protestant majority and in February of 1529 decided in favor of the Reformation. On April 1, 1529, the formal establishment of the Reformation took place in the form of a city ordinance which established the Reformation and its doctrines as the policy of the town. Oecolampadius was instrumental in the formulation of the constitution, a matter which will be treated later more in detail.

During these same busy years of 1528-29 Oecolampadius accomplished much. He continued his patristical studies, translating the fathers. In 1528 he married Wibrandis Rosenblatt, which prompted Erasmus to remark that it was time to stop talking about the Lutheran tragedy, for it was much more a comedy, always ending in a wedding!<sup>40</sup> Oecolampadius and his wife had three children, whom he characteristically named Eusebius, Aletheia, and Irene--Godliness, Truth, and Peace.

In 1529 Oecolampadius attended the famous conference of Marburg with Zwingli, meeting with Luther and Melanchthon to try to

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<sup>40</sup>Rupp, p. 33.

eliminate the doctrinal differences between the Lutherans and the Zwinglians concerning the Lord's Supper. Luther and Zwingli were vehement personalities, while Oecolampadius and Melanchthon were mild and quiet. Thus in the private conference preceding the public debate Luther was paired with Oecolampadius and Zwingli with Melanchthon.<sup>41</sup> The public colloquy produced agreement on all points except the question of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. The Swiss conceded Christ's real presence in the elements, but they could not agree to his corporeal presence. Luther remained adamant, having at the start of the talks written on the table in front of him, "This is my body;" from the literal interpretation of these words he could not be budged. When the conference failed, he grumbled to the Swis, "Ihr habt einen andern Geist denn wir" ("You have a different Spirit than we").<sup>42</sup>

In the last two years of his life, 1530-31, Oecolampadius occupied himself with the reform of church government, trying to systematize it and free it from state control. Of this we will say more later, but it should be noted from a historical viewpoint that although he accomplished some order in church polity, he was largely unsuccessful in separating church and state because of the opposition of the council.<sup>43</sup> He also vigorously opposed the growing menace of the Anabaptist movement, and succeeded in keeping Basel relatively free of it.

In 1531 his friend Zwingli was killed in battle at Cappel, and a few weeks later Oecolampadius himself died, a worn-out man, old before his time. He fell sick with a violent inflammation and breathed his last soon after. D'Aubinge describes for us his passing:

On the 23rd of November, he called his children around him, the eldest of whom was barely three years old. "Eusebius, Irene, Aletheia," he said to them, as he took their little hands, "love God Who is your Father." Their mother having promised for them, the

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<sup>41</sup>J.H. Kurtz, Church History (Philadelphia, 1878), Vol. III, p.72.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>43</sup>Rupp, pp. 41-42.

children retired with the blessing of the dying servant of the Lord. The night that followed this scene was his last. All the pastors were around his bed: "What is the news?" asked Oecolampadius of a friend who came in. "Nothing," was the reply. "Well," said the faithful disciple of Jesus, "I will tell you something new." His friends awaited in astonishment. "In a short time I will be with the Lord Jesus." One of his friends now asking him if he was incommoded by the light, he replied, putting his hand on his heart, "There is light enough here." The day began to break; he repeated in a feeble voice the 51st Psalm: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to thy lovingkindness." Then remaining silent, as if he wished to recover strength, he said, "Lord Jesus, help me." The ten pastors fell on their knees around his bed with uplifted hands; at this moment the sun rose, and darted his earliest rays on a scene of sorrow so great and so afflicting with which the church was again stricken.<sup>44</sup>

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Oecolampadius was by all accounts a quiet and retiring personality. His preference was always for his books and a quiet study in which to work. He far preferred to devote himself to his patristical studies and linguistic endeavors than to the bustle of public life. But he was not destined for such a life, for it was God's purpose that he become a leader. He was thrust into the public eye and into a position of leadership in Basel, and proved himself equal to the task, though he would have preferred otherwise. As Rupp puts it: "Beginning as an amiable, shy dilettant, with evident elements of instability, he was not embittered or broken by misadventures and disappointments, but came to a more and more fruitful employment of his gifts for the service of his Church."<sup>45</sup> Thus the man who seemed to be the least qualified to be a leader of men and the champion of a cause was used by God to accomplish the Reformation of Basel. He became not only a courageous leader and an attempted mediator within the Reformation, but also God's instrument to develop further the truths of the Reformation.

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<sup>44</sup>. J.H.M. D;Aubinge, History of the Reformation (New York, n.d.) Vol. IV, pp. 504-505.

<sup>45</sup>Rupp, p. 45.

God directed Oecolampadius throughout his life and prepared him for his work, as even a cursory survey of his life will indicate. God prepared him for some 40 long years for his mere 10 years' work as a Reformer. He was led from his early humanism and strong Roman Catholic views at Weinsberg to begin to question some of the things he had been taught. His studies under Reuchlin and his assistance to Erasmus enabled him in later days to exegete the Scriptures in the original languages. His association with Capito and contacts with other Reformers first planted strong seeds of doubt in his mind, until he was finally convinced of the errors of Roman Catholicism. His stay in the convent of Altenmunster tipped the scales, showing him clearly the folly of the Church, and soon he was committed to the Reformation. Through his friendships gained at various universities he not only came into contact with many illustrious Reformers, but also was enabled to go many places, e.g., Basel in 1522, at the invitation of friends. Thus although at first glance Oecolampadius' life for the first 40 years seems confused and purposeless, God used all of his experiences to prepare him for his later work as Reformer, and his knowledge and depth stood him in good stead in his battle for the truth. All we can say when we survey the life and character of this man whom God shaped and molded to fit His purpose is, "Weakest means fulfill thy will!"

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#### OECOLAMPADIUS: HIS MAJOR VIEWS

To determine and condense the major views of Oecolampadius entails some difficulty. He did write a considerable amount on various subjects, and these writings have been collected by Hess, Herzog, and Hagenbach. But the writings themselves are unavailable to me, and from this arises the difficulty. However, Oecolampadius is quoted and his views summarized by several authors, and from these sources it is possible to determine his views.

Oecolampadius' writings include commentaries, notably that on Isaiah, sermons, exegetical and polemical tracts, especially on the subject of the Lord's Supper, letters to various people, especially other Reformers, and translations of several early church fathers,

including Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Cyril of Alexandria.<sup>46</sup>

First, Oecolampadius held and defended the basic Christian and Reformation doctrines. He recognized no other rule of judgment than the Word of God, taking this position concretely against Eck in the Baden disputation.<sup>47</sup> However, Leonard points to Oecolampadius' mystical tendencies, whereby he gave greater importance to the "inner Word" than to the external Word" of Scripture.<sup>48</sup> This assertion wants proof, but in light of his view of the importance of the Lord's Supper (which we shall treat presently) Leonard could be correct. However this may be, Oecolampadius in his disputes and teachings undoubtedly did stand upon the authority of Scripture alone.

The Reformer also held the cardinal doctrines of the Trinity and predestination. He emphatically defended the Trinity and the divinity of Christ against the heretic Servetus in 1530.<sup>49</sup> On the doctrine of predestination he expressed himself no less emphatically, though his doctrine on this subject is certainly no advance in the development of the concept, for he left the truth of reprobation alone. His views may be summed up concisely in his own words: "Salus nostra ex Deo, perditio nostra ex nobis" (Our salvation is of God, our perdition is of ourselves).<sup>50</sup>

But Oecolampadius did not completely shake off his Roman Catholic thinking. The Ordinance of the City of Basel (1529), for which he was largely responsible and which to a great degree reflected his thinking attacks those who "despise and insult the eternal queer elect and pure, the Blessed Virgin Mary," and "allege that the Mother of God was a woman like any other, that she bore other

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<sup>46</sup>Schaff, p. 116

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 100

<sup>48</sup>Leonard, p. 155.

<sup>49</sup>Schaff, p. 715.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

children and did not remain a virgin."<sup>51</sup> Oecolampadius' exegesis was obviously lacking at this point. Nor did he have a correct understanding of sin, which is somewhat surprising in the light of his knowledge of Luther's teachings, but perhaps understandable in the light of his Semi-Pelagian background in the Church of Rome. He held the Roman Catholic view of sin whereby "the excellent disposition to act aright has been weakened in us."<sup>52</sup> But when his views on the major doctrines of Christianity are considered in toto, there can be no doubt that he believed and assumed in his work and teaching the great Reformation doctrines, especially the authority of Scripture and justification by faith.

Second, Oecolampadius had a definite interest in matters of liturgy. Although he did not accomplish a great deal in this field, probably because of the many other things that demanded his attention, one gets the distinct impression from his biographers that he would have liked to devote more time and effort to the liturgical aspects of the Christian life. He had an early interest in the field, for already at Altenmünster he had composed a litany for the sick and dying, a simplified form of which was later published in Basel.<sup>53</sup> 1526 was the year in which he did most of his liturgical work. The preface to some of his writings stressed the need for experiment and diversity as a branch of Christian liberty.<sup>54</sup> The work included a Formulary for Baptism, The Lord's Supper, and The Visitation of the Sick.<sup>55</sup> It was written in German so that the common people could understand it, but still retained some Romish aspects, such as priestly absolution and the use of lights on the altar.<sup>56</sup> He also introduced in Basel the singing of Psalms in German, a practice very popular with the people.<sup>57</sup> Oecolampadius' ideas, as set forth in a letter in 1525, demonstrate a profound

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<sup>51</sup>Leonard, p. 155

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>53</sup>Rupp, p. 28

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Leonard, p. 155

<sup>56</sup>Schaff, p. 111

<sup>57</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 305.

insight into proper worship and anticipate future liturgical developments:

After the confession, gospelling, hymns and prayers and after the Trisagion, I would have a period of silence appointed in which each might fervently meditate within himself on the Passion of the Lord. Then the words of the Lord's Supper appointed for the rite should be read publicly and intelligibly, and when these have been read, again a great silence for meditation and the giving of thanks. Afterwards should come the Lord's Prayer and, when this is over, the communicants should be summoned to the Lord's Supper, having first been admonished by the minister that each shall examine and judge himself. And if anybody is present who has been admonished by the Church the second or third time according to the Lord's command he should be repelled from the table until there is sure proof of his penitence, and he is reconciled. Then when they have received communion with the exhortation to charity and care of the poor, the congregation might depart in peace.<sup>58</sup>

Third, the subject of church polity occupied the attention of Oecolampadius in Basel. He developed and set forth and attempted to put into practice not only his ideas of the internal government of the church, but also its relation to the state. Thus he was led to develop the idea of the church and its proper membership, and because of the peculiar political situation in Basel (indeed, in all of Switzerland), the idea of the distinction of church and state.

As far as the idea of the church is concerned, Oecolampadius expressed himself this way:

The Church is the Vineyard of the Lord, His Heritage, His Temple and His Bride; even more she is His Body, for which He has shed His precious blood and outside which there is no salvation. If one is not concerned for the Church then martyrdom has no crown, charity is no longer a good work and religious knowledge brings no wisdom. The man who does not love the Church does not love Jesus Christ.<sup>59</sup>

Further, the church is composed of "those who truly confess Jesus Christ and who, from brotherly love, do not separate themselves from other men, and who profess this same faith in its pure form

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<sup>58</sup>Rupp, p. 26.

<sup>59</sup>Leonard, p. 160.

and do not separate themselves from the church in spirit."<sup>60</sup> Thus Oecolampadius clearly implies the organic unity of the invisible body of Christ which was further developed by Calvin and others.

The questions of church government and membership also drew Oecolampadius' attention and immediately involved him in the question of the relation of church and state, which was the basic issue. The question was, "Who is responsible for the government of the church--the church or the state?" The occasion which involved Oecolampadius in this question was the issue of excommunication; his views are set forth mainly in an address to the Synod of Basel in 1530, De reducenda excommunicatione, summarized by Rupp.<sup>61</sup>

In the first part of the oration, Oecolampadius declares that, having pondered the correct way of dealing with sinners, he was convinced that they should not simply be turned over to the civil powers. Rather, the discipline of the church is part of the pastoral office of the church, for the church is not concerned with outward actions, as is the state, but with the motives of the heart. Sinners can be convinced of their errors if they are publicly cut off from the body of Christ as apostate.

In the second part, Oecolampadius assigns the power of excommunication to the church, not to individuals, as did the Roman Catholic Church. "We are ministers in the church of Christ," said he, "and we must remember that we are indeed ministers and seek not our own authority, but that of the church."<sup>62</sup> This power cannot be given to the congregation, "for the multitude is not capable of sound judgment."<sup>63</sup> Rather, the true representatives of the

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Rupp, pp. 39-40.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, p. 39. .

<sup>63</sup>Leonard, p. 158.

church should be, as in the early church, the elders, "whose judgment, as of the more prudent, expresses the mind of the church."

<sup>64</sup> There should also be representatives of the magistracy involved. Thus the four town pastors, four elders, and four council members would together deal with the offenses affecting purity of doctrine and life.<sup>65</sup> But the church must not simply relinquish its discipline to the civil powers.

In the third part of the speech Oecolampadius deals with the carrying out of this discipline. One of the 12 censors should deliver a brotherly admonition to the sinner, followed by a second from two or three. Then the whole body of 12 is to admonish, and if all these admonitions fail, excommunication ends the matter.

From all of this it is evident that Oecolampadius had a basically correct idea of church government. We will further evaluate his position later, but one thing is certainly clear: He insisted upon the spiritual government of the spiritual church as the body of Christ. Though there were problems in the implementation of his system, especially concerning the Lutheran minority in Basel, it was generally workable without compromising the place and authority of the church.

Finally, the matter of the Lord's Supper was the subject of Oecolampadius' studies and labors. He is perhaps best known for his views on the Lord's Supper, probably because of his major role at the Cölloquy of Marburg in 1529. Also, this subject occupied much of his time and energy, for it was the issue of the day between Lutherans and Zwinglians. Therefore we consider his views on this burning issue of dissension-causing strife within the Reformation.

As might be expected, Oecolampadius' views on the Lord's Supper are most detailedly expressed in the records of the conference of Marburg. There are many accounts of this incident, but perhaps Wylie in his History of Protestantism<sup>66</sup> has the most interesting

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<sup>64</sup>Rupp., p. 39.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Wylie, pp. 555, ff.

and comprehensive account, even rendering part of the conversations of the participants. It seems that Oecolampadius and Luther began the discussion, and that later Zwingli attempted to convince Luther of his error after Oecolampadius failed. (It must be remembered that the purpose of the Marburg Colloquy was to resolve differences between Lutherans and Zwinglians, and that the Zwinglians went to the conference with conciliatory attitudes in the hope of a settlement of the problems). Luther had made up his mind right from the start that he would not be moved from his position that the body of Christ was literally present in the Supper, and it was precisely this position which Oecolampadius attempted to and actually did refute, though not to Luther's satisfaction. Oecolampadius began by proving to Luther that there were figures of speech in the Bible; he admitted this, but said that the words, "This is my body" did not fall into this category. When Oecolampadius showed that Christ's words in John 6 involved him in a contradiction, Luther attempted to make a distinction between a spiritual and a material eating of Christ's body, thus implicitly admitting he was wrong. When Oecolampadius pointed this out, Luther simply reiterated his earlier literal interpretation of the words. When Zwingli argued along the same lines he was met with the same obstinate and unexplainable (by Luther) reply. Zwingli also quoted to Luther words from the church fathers Augustine and Fulgentius supporting his position and involved Luther in further contradictions. When Oecolampadius again took over and hammered again at his original argument, Luther responded, "I will not move a single step. Only Augustine and Fulgentius are with you; all the rest of the fathers are with us." "As, for instance?" quietly inquired Oecolampadius. "Oh, we will not name them," exclaimed Luther; "Christ's words suffice for us."<sup>67</sup> It is plainly evident that Oecolampadius stood on firm ground; he insisted upon and proved three main points: 1) That the words, "This is my body" are a figure of speech; 2) That the eating in the Lord's Supper is a spiritual eating; 3) That the fathers support his position. Here again his patristical learning stood him in good stead.

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<sup>67</sup>Wylie, p. 561.

This position which Oecolampadius took at Marburg was not new for him. Already in 1525 he had set forth his views, which differed somewhat from Zwingli's. Zwingli found the trope in "This is my body" in the word "is", which he rendered significat. But "Oecolampadius characteristically fastened upon a patristic phrase in which Tertullian took 'body' to be figura corporis. Here, then, was Oecolampadius' contribution to the controversy, to bring his patristic learning to bear, and to appeal to a spiritual interpretation of the presence which could be found in the writings of the Fathers."<sup>68</sup> Schaff points out that "He agreed in substance with Zwingli, but differed from him by placing the metaphor in the predicate rather than in the verb, which simply denotes a connection of the subject with the predicate whether real or figurative, and which was not even used by our Lord."<sup>69</sup>

In 1527 he stressed the true spiritual presence of Christ in setting forth his teachings:

I believe the natural body of Christ to be in one place, namely heaven: otherwise there would be no true body.

I freely confess the Body of Christ to be present in the bread in that mode in which it is present in the Word itself, through which the bread becomes a sacrament and a visible word.

Through faith the Body of Christ which is as absent as it can be is as present as it can be to the soul.

This presence of the flesh of Christ is profitable indeed: but profitless and far from the manner of faith it is, if we say that bread is the substantive body or that the Body of Christ may be in many places at once.

Those who reject a trope in the words of the Lord's Supper declare themselves to be contentious, and interpret the Scriptures otherwise than by the analogy of faith.

They speak well and religiously, who say that they come to the Body of the Lord, or eat his Body; profanely and contemptibly, who declare that they only receive the bread and a sign; for they declare their unbelief...if they say they have eaten the sign only and not also the thing signified, which the sign means,<sup>70</sup> the one with the mouth, the other with the mind.

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<sup>68</sup>Rupp, p. 25.

<sup>69</sup>Schaff, p. 111.

<sup>70</sup>Rupp, p. 27.

This is supported by Herzog, who says that he held "that our souls are truly nourished by the true body and blood of Christ, and that Christ is present to the believers in the Eucharist, although not in a manner essentially differing from his general presence in the church."<sup>71</sup>

Again in 1530 Oecolampadius reiterated his position, supporting it with quotations ranging from Irenaeus, Athanasius, and Chrysostom to Theophylact and Hesychius, once more basing his views on the teachings of the leaders of the early church.<sup>72</sup>

Yet, in spite of his insistence on the correct doctrine of the Lord's Supper, Oecolampadius placed relatively little emphasis on the sacrament itself, probably because the whole subject had through controversy been blown far out of proper proportion. McClintock and Strong say that "he regarded the ordinance of the Supper as per se a hindrance, rather than a means of grace; as a form, from which the Christian should seek to be freed, rising above it to immediate fellowship with God."<sup>73</sup> While this is too harsh a judgment, it is true that Oecolampadius de-emphasized the benefit of the Lord's Supper for the believer personally, it is plain from his own words: "Believers should use the sacrament more for their neighbors' sake than their own. For themselves they are already under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they are free, they are purified, they are justified, and, being one with Christ, the kingdom of God is already within them."<sup>74</sup> Again:

The believer is continually feeding upon the body of Jesus Christ, even when he is not present at this external and visible table. Why, then, should he not similarly feed upon it while he is actually receiving the Lord's Supper?...The man who only feels his soul to be truly restored when he eats at this table is to be pitied...If only he were able, so far as his own soul is concerned, to dispense with all these practices and

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<sup>71</sup>Quoted by McClintock-Strong, p. 305.

<sup>72</sup>Rupp, pp. 42-43.

<sup>73</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 305.

<sup>74</sup>McClintock, Strong, p. 305.

not to feel the lack of them.<sup>75</sup>

And again: "The believer should make use of the sacraments more for his neighbor than for himself...The profession of faith which occurs in the Lord's Supper is a means of demonstrating his faith and of promoting the salvation of his neighbor."<sup>76</sup>

Even in the face of such statements as these, we must not lose sight of the main point. That point is that Oecolampadius did indeed staunchly defend the Scriptural idea of the Lord's Supper and could not be moved from his stand. Nor are the above statements in conflict with his doctrinal position on the sacrament. Thus, although he did not give the Lord's Supper its proper significance and place in the life of the church (though it must be noted that he implied, also in the above statements, that it is a means of grace), Oecolampadius did not let that idea obscure his clear understanding of its meaning, to his credit.

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#### OECOLAMPADIUS: HIS PLACE IN HISTORY

What remains for us to do is to evaluate both Oecolampadius' views and his place and influence in the Reformation. When we do this, we must from the beginning be careful of our approach. If we ask, "Was Oecolampadius 'Reformed'? Did he set forth and maintain the Reformed truths as we know them today? Did he develop an organic view of Scripture and of redemption? Did he maintain a correct conception of God's covenant with His people?" then the answer must be, "no." But if we ask such questions, then we ask the wrong questions and badly misjudge the man, for we will surely obtain the wrong answers. It is not correct to evaluate a 16th century figure in terms of today and then necessarily condemn him on many points. We must, of course, have a yardstick by which to measure Oecolampadius (and all figures of church history), and that yardstick is the truth of the Reformed faith. But we must be careful how we apply such a standard; we must not apply it in an absolute way, for then we misrepresent and misjudge the man. So also

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<sup>75</sup>Leonard, p. 156.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

with Oecolampadius; we must apply the objective standard of the truth, but we must do so in the light of his own times and according to his place in the history of the church. Only in this way will we obtain a fair and balanced view of him and his views.

Concerning Oecolampadius' views on the major doctrines of the Reformation little need be said. He stood solidly on the foundation of the church of the past, and stood shoulder to shoulder with the other Reformers in upholding the supremacy and authority of Scripture as the only rule of faith and life. In respect to the fundamentals Oecolampadius was generally correct and orthodox, though, as has been noted, he did not completely shake off Roman Catholic Semi-Pelagianism. However, since his theology and work did not directly concern this doctrine, his erroneous position concerning it did not greatly affect or color his general teachings. It is striking that we do not encounter this Semi-Pelagianism in any of his known writings or teachings.

Oecolampadius' views with respect to the liturgy of the church, though not detailed, have several interesting aspects which show a good understanding of the worship in the church and also anticipate later Reformed liturgical ideas. He had most of the basic elements in his liturgy, as can be seen from his proposals quoted earlier. Particularly good is his concept of self-examination before partaking of the Lord's Supper. Also interesting is the place he gives to silent meditation, which certainly seems to have its merits. In summary we may say that Oecolampadius' liturgy was far from complete but that in light of the fact that he was striking out into a new and undeveloped area it is surprisingly advanced and perceptive.

As far as the Reformer's views on the church and its government are concerned, it is evident on the surface from what has already been said that he was basically correct. He had a concept of the organic unity of the church, which he characterized as the body of Christ. The church was important for him, too, for outside of it there could be no salvation; again, though not detailed, his conception was basically correct. But what is most amazing is his concept, be it in theory, of the distinction between church and state. Oecolampadius was blazing a trail into the uncharted wilderness of the proper relation between church and state. He was going

where none had gone before, which is all the more noteworthy because of his background in the Catholic Church and its perverted idea of church control of the state in a temporal and earthly way. Zwingli had capitulated in Zurich and allowed the civil government to rule the church; Luther was having his problems in Germany. But Oecolampadius saw that the current situation was hardly Scriptural and maintained that the spiritual church had to be governed by spiritual means. Though he succeeded in applying this principle only in part in Basel, he was certainly correct in his thinking. What makes all of this even more astonishing is the historical situation in which he developed and partially applied his view. The history of the church since the beginning of the Reformation had been the history of the state; they were inseparable and often confused and intermingled. This is abundantly clear from the Lutheran Reformation in Germany, and is perhaps even more true of the various Swiss cantons. In the face of the existing practice of the day and contrary to the thinking of the previous Reformers Oecolampadius wanted a separation of the realms of authority, and he wanted it on solid Scriptural grounds. While he did not oppose the idea of a state church per se, for he was yet a child of his times, he was ahead of his time in that he anticipated both Calvin's Geneva and later Reformed views on the relation of church and state. With Oecolampadius we have the seeds of later thought, a truly noteworthy tribute to the Reformer.

Oecolampadius' position on the Lord's Supper is perhaps the easiest to evaluate because it was on this subject that he expressed himself most clearly and definitely. He had a thoroughly Reformed conception (though the term is anachronistic, it is certainly applicable) of the essence of the sacrament, as is evident from the later Second Helvetic Confession, which embodied the views of the church of Basel, and thus of Oecolampadius.<sup>77</sup> He properly distinguished between the sign and the thing signified, and set forth clearly the spiritual presence of Christ and the spiritual eating of the believer through faith. And he succeeded in his differing with the Lutherans in avoiding the pitfall of the "memorial" concept of the Lord's Supper which many assert that Zwingli held, and

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<sup>77</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 305. - 49 -

which assertion in the light of the disagreement between him and Oecolampadius has some credibility. Even Calvin, who at first refused to read Oecolampadius' writings because Luther had said all Oecolampadius left were bare and empty figures,<sup>78</sup> later found his refutation of Luther's corporeal presence concept correct, though Calvin says that Oecolampadius did not define the spiritual presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.<sup>79</sup> Calvin is wrong in this last assertion, for Oecolampadius certainly did define this idea, cf. pg. 45 above. But the main point is that he, the father of Reformed thought, agreed with Oecolampadius on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. We may, in summary, unqualifiedly accept Oecolampadius' teachings on the nature of the sacrament.

The aspect of the importance of the Lord's Supper poses more of a problem, however. Oecolampadius certainly did not attach enough importance to the sacrament and did not give it its proper place as a means of strengthening faith in connection with the preaching of the Word. Nor did he see clearly on the question of the importance of the Lord's Supper for the individual believer; he placed much more (and too much) emphasis on the idea of communion in the sacrament, thus creating a false disjunction between it and the partaking of the individual.

While it is obvious that he was mistaken on these two aspects of the importance and place of the Lord's Supper, we must not be overly condemnatory of Oecolampadius. These erroneous views were undoubtedly a reaction; the first was a reaction against all of the turmoil and strife concerning the Lord's Supper of which Oecolampadius was a part and which his quiet and peace-loving nature detested; the second was perhaps a reaction against the Lutheran emphasis on the individual's partaking of the literal body of Christ. Thus in reacting against the strife and misconceptions of his day Oecolampadius lapsed into the mistake of being too radical and going to the other extreme. Remembering this and remembering that Oecolampadius was ahead of his time in his conception of the

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<sup>78</sup>John Calvin, Tracts and Treatises (Edinburgh, 1849), Vol. II, p. 252.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., pp. 195-196, 307.

nature of the sacrament (which, after all, is the main point), we may be charitable toward him and not condemn his mistakes too harshly.

Considering Oecolampadius' life and work in general, we may mention several things which distinguish him from the other Reformers and for which he may be specially noted.

One such thing is his interest and work in the field of patristics. Perhaps more than any other Reformer of his era Oecolampadius was acquainted with the early church fathers. And his knowledge was not simply a matter of theory or intellectualism; not only did he know the fathers thoroughly and translate some of them, but he also put this acumen to practical use, e.g., in his work on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. It is clearly evident, especially in connection with the Marburg Colloquy, that Oecolampadius understood the fathers and stood firmly on the side of the historical faith of the church from the earliest times. But more important still is this aspect of Oecolampadius' work in light of the Roman Catholic accusation that the Reformers were guilty of schism and revolution in the church. Often the Romanists told the Reformers that they were breaking with the church of the past, denying historic doctrines, and creating doubt and disruption in the church, thus making themselves guilty of the sin of schism. But by the very fact that Oecolampadius could and did substantiate his teachings from the writings of the church fathers he proved that the accusation was false and that the reformed church was the true church which stood in unity with the church of antiquity. Though such Romish accusations have continued since his time, Oecolampadius took the sting out of them by showing that they had no truth. To show that the Reformed churches and not the Roman Catholic stood in organic connection with the post-apostolic church was, therefore, a very important contribution to the position which the true church has held ever since its inception.

Also, Oecolampadius saw himself as a possible mediator between the factions of the Reformation, more particularly, the Lutheran and Zwinglian branches. In this he was unique among those of his day, for they tended each one to hold his own views regardless of anything. This is not to say that Oecolampadius was a compromiser,

for he absolutely was not. But his attitude was one of moderation and conciliation. In this respect Oecolampadius blows like a cool wind across the hot desert of heated polemics and reciprocal insults, for in all that he did he urged gentleness, in keeping with his mild character. For example, he wrote to the violent and iconoclastic Farel, "Your mission is to evangelize, not to curse. Prove yourself to be an evangelist, not a tyrannical legislator. Men want to be led, not driven."<sup>80</sup> The most obvious and well-known instance of his attempted mediation was at Marburg; he went there with the express purpose of uniting the Lutherans and Zwinglians on the question of the Lord's Supper, and he strove mightily to attain that end. But he failed. From the viewpoint of God's counsel it was certainly God's purpose that he fail. But from a human viewpoint it is plain that only Luther's stubborn and unreasonable obstinacy prevented a settlement from being reached. Though Oecolampadius failed in every attempt, he is noteworthy for his sincere and dedicated efforts to restore unity to the church of Christ.

This position of mediator which he assumed also explains his relationship with Zwingli and Luther. We know little concerning his personal relation with either, and little concerning his ecclesiastical and doctrinal relation to Zwingli. But it is safe to say that Oecolampadius was superior to him. Zwingli spent much of his time embroiled in political difficulties because of the Swiss Reformation. This was certainly necessary under the circumstances and we cannot condemn him on this ground. But he did not devote as much time and effort to doctrinal reform and to the building up and establishment of the church as did Oecolampadius. Thus from the viewpoint of doctrinal development and from the viewpoint of the strengthening of the churches Oecolampadius was more influential than Zwingli. Especially noteworthy in this connection is the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, concerning which Oecolampadius was certainly much more clear and specific than Zwingli, as evidenced from the confusion about the latter's views, a confusion which prevails until the present. As far as Luther is concerned, Oecolampadius opposed him, especially on the question of the Lord's Supper. Though he certainly adopted and agreed with

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<sup>80</sup>Schaff, p. 238.

Luther's teachings on the nature of Scripture and on justification by faith, he sharpened the division between the Lutheran and Swiss (and consequently the Reformed) branches of the Reformation in spite of himself. Though Oecolampadius' intentions were the opposite, God used him to preserve in an antithetical way the truth of Scripture regarding the sacrament of the Lord's Supper by means of his controversy with Luther. Thus when we compare him with Luther and Zwingli we find that he stands above them from the aspect of his broader view of the Reformation and his place within it. He was not so limited in his perspective of the future of the Reformation as was especially Luther; because he developed and understood the idea of the organic unity of the church at least in principle, and because he understood the formidable enemy they faced in the Roman Catholic Church, he wanted unity. But his perspective was also far-reaching enough that he saw that the truth must be maintained when unity could not be achieved; he did not sacrifice the truth of Scripture on the altar of outward unity. The fact that he was able to look beyond his immediate time and circumstances is certainly a tribute to him. This idea is substantiated by the last point which must be made concerning Oecolampadius.

Finally, it is important to note also that Oecolampadius prepared the way for later aspects of the Reformation. The reforms which he instituted in Basel and the attitudes which he established influenced others and stood as models even after his passing. Perhaps the most striking example of this concerns John Calvin. We have already noted that Calvin read and essentially agreed with Oecolampadius on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. But Oecolampadius' influence on the greatest of the Reformers went further still. Though it is not our purpose to write here concerning Calvin himself, it is certainly proper to point out the relation in which Oecolampadius stood to him. Leonard, in speaking of Calvin's preparation for his work in Geneva, sums it all up:

Here, in Basel itself, he pondered Oecolampadius' ideas, as reflected in his books, in the conversation of his disciples and in the working of his community, and they taught him four things which he had not learnt from the works of Luther

or from the modest experiments in France: the importance of the Church, visible and organized as well as invisible; the need for ecclesiastical discipline; a repugnance for State intervention in this field; the advantages of the Basel type of<sup>81</sup> consistory, composed of pastors and laymen.

This certainly speaks highly of Oecolampadius!

We quote in conclusion the words of J.H.Worman, who powerfully and correctly summarizes the man, his work, and his place in history:

As has been truly said, Oecolampadius was the Lord's chosen instrument of leading on to victory these noble souls who had gathered under the banner of reform at Basel, and though cut down in the prime of manhood, he lived long enough to earn the glorious appellation of the Reformer of Basel. But his labors entitle him to an appellation more indicative of the wide sphere in which he worked. In his intellectual and moral qualities --his modesty, gentleness, love of peace, eagerness for union, academic tastes, fondness for a meditative rather than an active life, tendency to melancholy, relish for letters, and exquisite scholarship--he bore a striking resemblance to Luther's great friend and ally. Of all positions, that of a revolutionary leader, whether in Church or State, was the last one that Oecolampadius would have chosen to assume. If he had dared to follow his own inclinations, his life would have been spent in the quietude of the academy rather than amid the turbulence of the arena, in converse with books instead of contests with men. He was inclined to look with profound veneration upon everything that bore the marks of hoary antiquity, and hence the reluctance--we may almost call it--with which he abandoned the Romish Church, and severed one by one the ties which bound him to her communion. Among all the continental Reformers, none were less disposed to cast aside old forms, simply because they were old, or to introduce novelties merely for the purpose of making the Protestant worship as unlike the Popish as possible. In short, his tendencies and tastes, if yielded to, would have repelled him from the rude ways and rough work of the reformer; and his life supplies one of the many illustrations of the fact that the Lord chooses instruments which in human view are most unsuitable for the accomplishment

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<sup>81</sup>Leonard, p. 315.

of his designs.<sup>82</sup>

As we look at Oecolampadius and understand him, then we love him and admire him for what he was, for that for which he stood, and for what he accomplished. And then our conclusion is, "Praise God for Oecolampadius, the Reformer of Basel!"

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<sup>82</sup>McClintock-Strong, p. 306.

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