

The Reformation brought light out of darkness. That light must shine anew to dissipate the darkness that encroaches on the gospel in our age. I hope this book will help awaken youth in America and throughout the English-speaking world to the vital truths set forth so clearly and boldly by the historic heroes of the Reformation.

— Dr. R.C. Sproul, President, Ligonier Ministries, Orlando, Florida



In a day when there are idols in abundance, but few heroes, this beautifully written and illustrated book will do much to stir questioning young minds to probe the purpose of their own lives. Diana Kleyn and Joel Beeke have once again found a way to make history both interesting and challenging. By grace, Reformation Heroes is a book that will help capture young minds and hearts for Christ.

— Dr. Sinclair Ferguson, Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church,
Columbia, South Carolina



Reformation Heroes is a valuable introduction to important figures in the Reformation. The stories told are inspiring and encouraging—and should be remembered among us as evidences of the grace of God at work.

— Dr. W. Robert Godfrey, President, Westminster Seminary in California

This beautifully written and illustrated volume, co-authored by Diana Kleyn and Joel Beeke, is a joy to read and deserves a place in any home where the triumphs of the Reformation are held dear. It provides a sure resource for inquiring young minds to capture the thrill of God's work in the lives of men and women primarily in the sixteenth century. Reformation Heroes is a magnificent achievement.

— Dr. Derek Thomas, John E. Richards Professor of Theology,
Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi



Living as we do in a generation so wrapped up in the present, we need tools, wisdom, and skill to impress upon the young of our day and in our churches—for our church youth are not immune to the follies of the age—that study of the Christian past is worthwhile and deeply rewarding. Here is one such tool. The authors are to be warmly commended for giving our young people fresh access to the riches of the Reformation, namely, God's saints who did such great exploits for the kingdom of the Lord Christ. These men and women were not perfect—and their flaws are not overlooked—but they were “sold out” for Christ and Scripture-truth. And in our degenerate day, we need such models held before our young people—just as what is done with the saints of Hebrews 11—to encourage them to run the Christian race and find at the very end the Lord Jesus—the sum and substance of all that is best in the history of the Reformation.

— Dr. Michael Haykin, Professor of Church History,
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,
Louisville, Kentucky

Reformation
HEROES

Reformation HEROES

A Simple, Illustrated Overview of People
Who Assisted in the Great Work of the Reformation

by Diana Kleyn with Joel R. Beeke

Illustrated by Caffy Whitney and others

Based on Richard Newton's *The Reformation and Its Heroes*



Reformation Heritage Books
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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Published by
Reformation Heritage Books
2965 Leonard St., NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
616-977-0599 / Fax 616-285-3246
e-mail: orders@heritagebooks.org
website: www.heritagebooks.org

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Kleyn, D. M. (Diana M.)

Reformation heroes: a simple, illustrated overview of people who assisted in the great work of the Reformation / by Diana Kleyn with Joel R. Beeke; based on Richard Newton's *The Reformation and its heroes*.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-60178-028-7 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Reformation—Biography. I. Beeke, Joel R., 1952- II. Newton, Richard, 1813-1887. *Reformation and its heroes*. III. Title.

BR315.K54 2007

270.6092'2--dc22

[B]

2007039671

Cover artwork by Caffy Whitney: Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley being burned at the stake.
For additional artwork by Caffy Whitney, see pages 52, 62, 87, 106, 108, 116, 130, 134, 151, 160, 168, 171, 183, 187.

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To my parents,

Liz and Murray Sommer,

who taught me to value the
scriptural doctrines
rediscovered during the
Reformation

— DK



With heartfelt appreciation to

Gary and Linda den Hollander,

quality and faithful friends for twenty-five years,
quiet and effective workers in God's kingdom,
a quick and meticulous typesetting/proofreading team

— JRB

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Introduction

Since the close of the New Testament history and the founding of the Christian church, no more-important event has taken place than the great Reformation of the sixteenth century. Martin Luther wrote his ninety-five theses almost five hundred years ago. This caused the Reformation to take firm root.

The Reformation did not happen all at once. As you read this book, you will learn that the Lord used some people to plant the seeds of church reform (see chapters 1–4) long before Martin Luther posted the ninety-five theses on the church doors of Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. The story of Luther and the ninety-five theses is well known (see chapter 5). We trust you will find it interesting and instructive to read about other events and people contributing to the Reformation—some well-known and others not so well-known—most of whom are Reformation heroes. They form the bulk of this book (see chapters 6–31). To provide a fuller picture of the many-sided Reformation, chapters are also included on the Anabaptist and Counter Reformation movements (see chapters 32–33). Finally, the book concludes with a brief summary of the influence of the Reformation in different areas of life.

Because this book is written for older children and teens, a glossary is included which can be found in Appendix E. Any time you are not sure of the meaning of a word, check the glossary in the back of the book. This will give you the meaning of the word in the context of the chapter you are reading. Also, most quotations have been simplified so that you can understand what was said, since much of the language of long ago was flowery and consisted of long sentences. The sources have been given, however, in case you would like to find the original quotes.

This book serves as an update, rewrite, and expansion of Richard Newton's *The Reformation and Its Heroes* (1897). We have

also relied fairly extensively on the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) for our final authority on various issues concerning facts and dates. Additional sources are noted in the text and in the bibliography.

The purpose of this book is threefold: first, to teach a general knowledge of the Reformation and the events leading up to it. Second, because young people often lack helpful mentors and role models, we wish to set forth accurate life stories of Reformers who are still genuine heroes and helpful mentors for us today. Third, we hope you also gain a deeper respect for the doctrines of the Reformation, as well as for the freedom we enjoy to worship God according to Scripture. Many people suffered and even gave their lives so that the gospel would be proclaimed and read everywhere. We have a rich heritage and much to be thankful for. Let us pray that the God of the Reformation may once again reform and revive His church through the lives of godly men and women who live for His glory. May you, dear children and young people, be among them.

Finally, we wish to thank seminarian Maarten Kuivenhoven for his valuable editing of this book and his work on the thorough bibliography which is designed also for adults who wish to study the Reformation in greater depth; Sharla Kattenberg, Kate DeVries, Gary den Hollander, and Martha Fisher for their proofreading; Linda den Hollander for her typesetting; Caffy Whitney for her artwork on the cover and throughout the book; and Amy Zevenbergen for her cover design and work on the illustrations. We also thank our spouses, Chris Kleyn and Mary Beeke, for their love and patience as this book moved rather laboriously through several drafts. May God graciously bless them for their servant hearts and kindness.

— DK/JRB

~ 1 ~

Peter Waldo

(c. 1140 – c. 1217)

*“How can I become
righteous before God?”*



The city of Lyons, France

In the middle of the twelfth century, a wealthy merchant by the name of Peter Waldo (or Peter Valdes) lived in Lyons (Lē-ōn), France. His house stood on a piece of land near the place where the Rhone¹ and the Saone² Rivers meet. The walls of the city were old and gray, the streets narrow and shadowed by tall houses on either side. The city of Lyons was famous for its commerce (buying and selling), so the wharves on both rivers were always busy. Lyons was most famous for its silk. In many homes, the clicking sound of the loom was heard. Numerous trees had been planted outside the city walls. On these trees, silk worms were bred, and the cocoons were used for making silk.

Waldo is awakened to spiritual life

Peter Waldo had been very successful in his business, but he was not selfish or greedy. He was known in Lyons for his kindness and generosity. One day, something happened that made him feel concerned not only for the physical well-being of the people in his city, but also for their spiritual well-being. Waldo was visiting some of his friends. After supper, one of the men suddenly fell down and died. This made a tremendous impression on Waldo.

1. The Rhone River is a major European river about 500 miles long. It begins at the Rhone Glacier in the Swiss Alps and flows through Lake Geneva, then southward through France to the Mediterranean Sea.

2. The Saone River is about 270 miles long. It begins in eastern France and joins the Rhone River at Lyons.

He began to seek for truth. He saw people living sinful lives. He noticed others trying to ease their guilty consciences by doing penance. Waldo also did penance for his sins, but it did not give him any peace. He asked the priests, "How can I become righteous before God?" The priests, however, could not answer this question. Waldo knew he was a sinner; his conscience told him so. He knew he was not ready to die, but when he asked the priests what he had to do to be saved, he was not satisfied with their answers.

He discovers the Bible

The Bible held the answers to Waldo's questions, but he did not own a Bible. Rich as he was, he did not have the greatest of treasures. The few copies of the Bible which did exist in those days were kept in libraries that common people were not allowed to visit. Besides, they were written in Latin, and few people could read even their own language, let alone Latin. Even if a person could read Latin, Bibles were very rare.

Soon afterward, Waldo read some books written by someone who lived shortly after the time of the apostles. In these books, he found many passages that quoted the New Testament. This brought him comfort, and he realized that the answers to all his questions were to be found in God's Word. Reading these passages of Scripture made him eager to buy the entire Bible.

After some time, Waldo was finally able to buy a Bible. It cost him a lot of money, but he didn't mind, for in its pages he found the way of salvation. He learned that he could only approach God through the Mediator, Jesus Christ, and that God requires a humble, contrite heart, as well as obedience. The Lord graciously moved Waldo to receive salvation on

His terms. Before, he was confused and troubled; now he was peaceful and glad. He felt like a new man. The burden had been lifted from his soul. He had light and comfort, for he had found mercy through faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners.

Poverty

Waldo heard about a young man named Alexis. This young man had been very rich, but he had given all his riches to the poor. This young man had done what Jesus told the rich young ruler to do in Matthew 19:21: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Waldo believed that God wanted him to do the same thing, so he gave his money and possessions to the poor and lived a simple life.

Concern for others

Waldo had been known for his kindness to all, but now he became more concerned about the souls of the people. The Bible had taught him how he must be saved, and now he longed to tell others this good news. He observed the people, who were deceived by the priests, trying to pay for their sins without the Lord Jesus Christ. Seeing this made him weep. He began to visit people, telling them what God says in His Word. He told them that God requires only repentance and faith in His Son; their good works could not save them. He urged them to come to Jesus by faith and have their sins washed away in His blood.

Waldo held many meetings with the poor in their cottages. He visited the sick and the dying, and held

meetings in the woods with people who were as confused as he had been. In his sermons, Waldo taught them the truth and spoke out against the worldliness of the Roman Catholic priests. He prayed with the people and gave them food and clothing if they needed it. He was so concerned for their souls as well as their physical needs, it is no wonder the people loved him.

The Bible translated into French

Still, there was something that Waldo longed for. He wished that the Bible would be translated into the language of the people. Very few people in France could read or understand Latin, which was the language of the Bible as well as all church services. The church did not want the Bible to be written in the language of the people. They told the people that only the priests were wise enough to understand the Bible and that the common people wouldn't be able to understand it anyway. Waldo disagreed. He believed that the people should be able to read the Bible and that as many people as possible should have their own Bibles. We are not sure if Waldo himself translated the Bible into French, or if he hired people to do it for him. Most likely, he and some others worked on it together.

It was a huge undertaking, but after having read the Bible himself, Waldo was convinced that it was necessary. Finally, it was finished. This was the first translation of the Bible into a modern language. What a blessed gift this was

to the people of France! Still, it could not be distributed to very many people, because the printing press had not yet been invented. Each copy had to be handwritten! This took many long hours, and that meant that a complete copy of the Bible was very expensive. Most people could not afford this, but Waldo was so eager to teach the people the way of salvation that he freely gave away many copies of the New Testament and separate books of the Bible. Many people read the Bible for the first time in their lives because of his efforts.



Peter Waldo teaching

The poor men of Lyons

Waldo not only had the Bible translated, but he also formed a missionary society. Many people who had been brought to love the Savior through the work of the Holy Spirit were sent out, two by two, into the area all around Lyons. They carried their books with them, even venturing into other countries. Many were led to a knowledge of the truth through the humble work of these "poor men of Lyons," as they were called. These poor men of Lyons took a vow of poverty. Waldo believed it was beneficial to be poor, as Jesus Himself was when He lived on earth.

These men visited all kinds of people. They would travel as peddlers, carrying a box of things to sell. Peddlers were people who traveled the countryside with various items they had for sale. When they entered people's homes, especially those of the rich, they would tell them they had something for sale that was more valuable than anything

else. Of course, people would want to know what it was, and the peddler would show them a Bible or a New Testament, or even just one book of the Bible. Then they would explain why this book was so valuable. In this way, the Bible found a place in the homes and hearts of many people.

The church opposes Waldo

You must not think that the pope and the priests thought Waldo and the poor men of Lyons were doing a good deed. In 1179, Waldo sent some of his poor men to the pope to ask for permission to preach. The pope granted them permission to preach if the archbishop also agreed. When Waldo asked the archbishop for permission to continue preaching, the archbishop responded, "If you continue to preach, I will have you condemned as a heretic and burned at the stake."

"How can I be silent in a matter that concerns the souls of men?" replied Waldo boldly. The archbishop repeated his stern warning and let him go.

When the archbishop heard that Waldo continued to teach the people, he sent some of his men to arrest him. These men were afraid of the citizens of Lyons, however, for they knew how much they loved Waldo. For three years, the people of Lyons hid him.

In 1184, Pope Lucius III anathemized Peter Waldo and the poor men of Lyons, which means he proclaimed that they were accursed. He ordered the archbishop of Lyons to stop Waldo from preaching and giving out Bibles to the people. The archbishop was eager to obey. Waldo fled from the city because it was no longer safe for him. He went from place to place, and everywhere he went, he taught people about the Bible. God blessed his efforts, and many people were saved.

Waldo and his friends were treated badly by their enemies. In those days, people were especially superstitious, and they did not trust these men who taught that the Roman Catholic Church was wrong. So they called them "sorcerers" (wizards) or "tur-lupines" (people who live with wolves). The term "poor men of Lyons" came to mean something bad. Often Waldo and his men could find no place to spend the night and had to sleep in the forest. What the author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote about the prophets can also be said of them: "They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Hebrews 11:37b–38).

In 1194, another pope, Alfonso II, made a proclamation that anyone who protected, fed, or even listened to Waldo's followers would be punished. Some of these Christians were burned at the stake, but even while they were being burned, they praised God for the privilege of working and suffering for Him who had suffered and died on the cross for them. Once, thirty-five Christian men and women were burned in one fire, and, another time, eighteen were burned at the stake. Hundreds of Christians were killed for their faith. God's truth, however, cannot be burned or destroyed. God Himself makes sure of that. In spite of the anger of their enemies, Waldo and his missionaries spread God's Word. People were converted, and many Bibles and New Testaments were sold.

The Waldensians

Because of fierce persecution, many of the poor men of Lyons fled to other countries, and so the gospel spread, just as it had when the apostles were scattered during the persecution in Jerusalem. Trying to find safety, some of Waldo's followers later joined with a group of people who had never agreed with the Roman Catholic Church. They shared Waldo's beliefs and were willing to work together in spreading the gospel during this time of persecution. This group of followers was almost unknown to the world, a "little flock" dwelling alone in the lovely, quiet valleys of Piedmont. Sometimes persecutors would seek them out to imprison or kill some of them, but there was always a "remnant" that continued to be faithful to the truth. This remnant began to be called "the Waldensians" (or "the Vaudois") after Peter Waldo (Valdes).

In spite of being pursued, Waldo's enemies did not succeed in killing him. God protected him so that he was able to travel to several countries to preach the gospel. He finally went to live in Bohemia, where he died peacefully around the year 1217.

After Waldo's death, the Waldensians increasingly organized themselves apart from the Roman Catholic Church by means of informal meetings in different areas. They ignored the church's decrees and appointed their own ministers. They taught that sacraments administered by priests who lived in sin were not valid. They also refused to pray for the dead and to worship saints and relics. And

they refused to take oaths or to fight in wars. In these ways, they distanced themselves from both church and society.

The Waldensians grew rapidly, especially among the poor. They spread first throughout southern France and Spain, and then into Germany. Persecution in these countries, however, forced them into the mountainous valleys of Italy. Though their numbers dwindled in France and Spain, they soon spread from Germany into Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary. In Bohemia, Waldensian preachers later became associated with the followers of John Huss, called the Hussites. The major difference between the two movements is that the Waldensians rejected the church's authority whereas the Hussites accepted that authority in principle though they disagreed with much of what the church said and did.

The efforts of Waldo and his followers were the seeds of the Reformation. Five years after the Reformation was born in 1517, the Waldensians made contact with Martin Luther. A little later they approached the southern German and Swiss Reformers. In 1532, they invited some Protestant representatives, including William Farel and Anthony Saunier, to attend one of their more

official gatherings, similar to what we would call a synod or an assembly. At that gathering, they adopted a new Confession of Faith, which included the doctrine of predestination. They also cut all ties with the Roman Catholic Church and decided that ministers could marry.



The Waldensian Seal

For a while, the Waldensians enjoyed some measure of freedom to worship. During that time, they built many places of worship, which they called “temples.” When Carlo Emmanuel II, Duke of Savoy, attacked them in the seventeenth century, Oliver Cromwell intervened on their behalf. This provided them about twenty years of liberty. In 1685, however, when the Edict of Nantes, which allowed for religious liberty, was revoked, many Waldensians were forced to cross the mountains under terrible conditions to find refuge in Switzerland. Though their outward conditions improved in the eighteenth century, it was not until 1848 that Charles Albert¹ gave them real religious and political freedom.

1. Charles Albert (Italian: Carlo Alberto Amedeo di Savoia; 1798–1849) was the King of Sardinia from 1831 to 1849. Sardinia is the second largest island in the Mediterranean Sea (after Sicily). Charles Albert was the son of Carlo Emanuele, Duke of Savoy (1770–1800).

Today, the membership of the Waldensians numbers about 20,000. Since 1920, they have trained their ministers at their own theological school in Rome. Their theology, however, is not well thought out, and it departs from biblical, Reformed theology at several points. For example, today most Waldensians embrace the Arminian doctrine of free will.

God touched one man, Peter Waldo, who in turn was graciously used to touch the hearts of hundreds of others. His obedience to God’s calling was a great blessing to many people.

~ 2 ~

John Wycliffe

(c. 1324–1384)

Wycliffe was certainly one of the most important forerunners of the Reformation. This is why he is referred to as the Morning Star of the Reformation. His influence on the Reformers was very great.



The morning star of the Reformation

Before the sun rises in the morning to drive away the darkness of the night, a bright star often shines beautifully in the eastern sky. We call it the morning star. It tells us that the sun will soon appear above the horizon. The Reformation was like the sun rising on the church after the long night. John Wycliffe was born during a time of great spiritual darkness. He has been called the morning star of the Reformation because God used him to shine rays of light into the spiritual darkness of England and much of Europe. He was not actually one of the Reformers, but he, like Peter Waldo, helped prepare the way for the Reformation.

Wycliffe's birth

John Wycliffe was born in a village called Ipreswel, near the town of Richmond, in Yorkshire in about 1324, almost two hundred years before the Reformation took place.

His last name has been spelled many different ways and is pronounced either Wī-klīf or Wī-klīf.

The Plague

In 1349, when he was about twenty-five years old, the plague swept through England. This fearful plague started in Asia and spread westwards across Europe. By August of that year, it had reached England. Because of the dark blotches on the sick person's skin, it was called "the Black Death." People

were terrified of this sickness. The plague was responsible for the death of about one third of the population. It left a deep impression on young Wycliffe. Merle d'Aubigne records, "This visitation of the Almighty sounded like the trumpet of the judgment day in the heart of Wycliffe." Desperately, he studied the Word of God, seeking refuge from the judgment to come. He spent hours in prayer, asking God to show him what to do with his life. He mentions the plague several times in his writings.

His studies and work as a minister and a debater

Wycliffe studied at Merton College at Oxford, first as a student and then as a teacher. He had many talents and gifts and quickly gained a reputation of being an excellent scholar. At Merton College, there was a godly professor named Thomas Bradwardine. This professor taught that God alone is able to save men from their sins by His sovereign grace. This teaching was blessed to young Wycliffe's heart. He began to love the Scriptures and studied them gladly. Eventually, he became a doctor of theology in 1372.

After entering the ministry, he moved three times. His last move was to a little town called Lutterworth. Here he spent the last ten years of his life, and this is the place with which his name is most often connected. Lutterworth is a small market town in the central part of England, about eighty miles from London. It stands on a hill overlooking the Swift River.

Wycliffe was a great preacher. He studied the Bible very carefully and loved to preach the gospel. He preached with a clarity, faithfulness, and power that were unusual in those days. Crowds came to hear him. His great piety gave power to what he said. His preaching came to the attention

of the king, Edward III, who was glad to hear him. It was not unusual for the pope and the king to be at odds with one another, and in Wycliffe's day it was no different. It used to be that the king was required to collect money from the church and then send it to Rome, where the pope lived. When King Edward III heard that Wycliffe taught that the king should not have to do this anymore, he was pleased. He supported Wycliffe.

Wycliffe was an effective debater as well as a preacher. A debater is someone who debates—that is, he discusses something with someone who has a different point of view from his own. The monks, priests, and friars of the church went around the country teaching the people all kinds of wrong doctrines. Wycliffe bravely debated with these men whenever he met with them. He also wrote many tracts about the errors of the church. His friends copied out these tracts and gave them to many people.

Wycliffe speaks against the monks and friars

At this time in England, there were many monks and friars. Monks were men who lived alone or separate from other people. Their homes were called monasteries, where a large number of monks lived together. "Friars" means "brothers." They were monks who were dependent on begging for their food. Instead of working for an income, they dressed as beggars and traveled all over the country, forcing their way into the houses of rich and poor, living without paying for things, and taking all the money they could get. They were supposed to live in poverty and be humble, as those who are "poor in spirit" and "the meek of the earth," but they spent so much time begging that they actually became wealthy. They wore expensive clothes and



Begging Friars

ate fine food. Their homes were beautiful, and they did not care to help the poor. Like the Pharisees, they pretended to be better and holier than others, although their lives were full of evil. They taught that those who belonged to their order, or group, were sure to be saved.

When Wycliffe saw the behavior of the friars, his heart was grieved. The best way he knew to oppose them was to write a book against them. He used some harsh words when he described the friars, calling them “the pests of society, the enemies of religion, and the promoters of every crime.” The friars, of course, were very angry when they read this and wanted to have him sentenced to death. But Wycliffe continued to write and preach against them. He worked so hard that his health began to suffer.

Wycliffe summoned to appear before the Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church was alarmed at the accusations against their clergy. Wycliffe openly spoke against the pope and against the sins of the church. The church was afraid the people would believe Wycliffe. They charged Wycliffe with heresy and summoned him to appear in St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. A huge crowd gathered to watch the proceedings

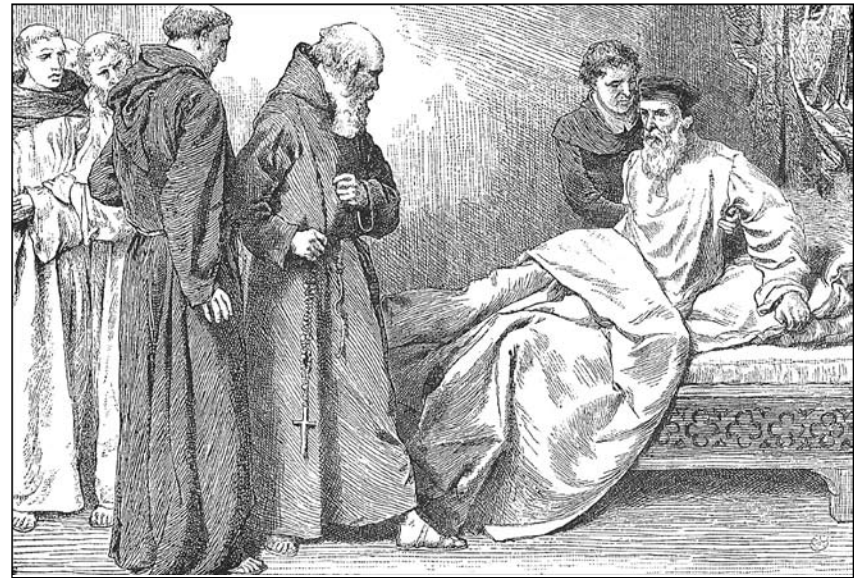
on February 19, 1377. Two influential men accompanied Wycliffe into the cathedral: Lord Percy, marshal of England, and John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. The Roman Catholic clergy brought many false accusations against Wycliffe. They wanted to get authority to stop him from preaching and have him imprisoned or put to death. Angry words were exchanged between these men and the Roman Catholic clergy. The crowd joined in the uproar that followed. The two men who were with Wycliffe escaped during the commotion. Wycliffe's case was dismissed, although he was warned not to preach against the Roman Catholic Church. Wycliffe, however, continued his preaching. Boldly, he stated that the pope was antichrist. The pope claimed to be the supreme ruler of the church on earth. Wycliffe said that such a claim was against the Scriptures: only Christ is King of His church.

In 1377, Wycliffe was denounced as a heretic and was summoned to another meeting in London. This time Wycliffe was not accompanied by his influential friends, but there were many people present who favored his teachings. They surrounded the church in protest and forced their way into the meeting, determined to protect their beloved pastor and friend. In the midst of this uproar, a message from Joan, the queen-mother, silenced the men who wanted to harm him. Joan, mother of Richard II and mother-in-law of Anne of Bohemia (of whom you will read in the next chapter) greatly admired Wycliffe and his teachings. She sent a message to stop the meeting. She forbade them to have this meeting and stated that Wycliffe was not the detestable heretic they said he was. The men were afraid to proceed with the meeting, and Wycliffe was free to go. The enemies of God's Word could not harm Wycliffe.

Wycliffe resolved more than ever to spread the gospel wherever he could. He endured many great trials. The times in which he lived were very unsettled and troubled. The bishops and other leading persons in the church disliked him very much because he preached against their errors.

Illness

Once, Wycliffe became very ill, and it seemed as if he was going to die. The Roman Catholic clergy was glad to hear that their enemy might die. Some of the "Begging Friars" came to see him. Wycliffe had said many severe things against them, and they asked him to take back all that he had said. They tried to frighten him by telling him that God would punish him eternally by sending him to hell for his heresy. He listened to them quietly for some time, then he



Wycliffe and the Friars

motioned to his friends to help him sit up. Looking intently at the friars, he said, "I shall not die, but live and declare the errors and sins of you wicked men more than ever!" Alarmed at his courage, the friars fled from the room.

His teachings

Wycliffe was born at a time when the power of the Roman Catholic Church was very great. There was no true preaching of the Word of God. Most people never saw a Bible, let alone one written in English, and even if they had seen one, they probably would not have been able to read it.¹ Even many of the wealthy could not write their own names. Often only one person in a whole town could read and write. It is easy to understand, then, why there was such little knowledge of the truth of God's Word.

The priests taught that people could earn forgiveness of sins by doing penance, buying indulgences (promises of forgiveness), or going on pilgrimages. In every area of life, the church exercised enormous control. Wycliffe taught that a sinful man could not save himself and that mercy was only to be found through faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. The priests taught that images ought to be worshiped, but Wycliffe said that the worship of images was idolatry and that saints and angels were not to be prayed to, for "there is but one mediator between God and men" (1 Timothy 2:5). Because Wycliffe so boldly opposed the doctrines of the church, the priests and bishops hated Wycliffe.

1. Margaret Shand (<http://www.epc.org.au/start/literature/bb/wycliffe.html>), drawn from "John Wycliffe," in *The Burning Bush* (Sydney: Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1998).

In his own village, however, he was much loved. He was often seen with a portion of his handwritten Bible under his arm, his staff in hand, visiting the people in order to share the Word of God with them. Rich and poor were glad when he came to visit. He was the friend of all; he was ready to teach, comfort, and pray with anyone in his community. Continually he sought the good of his flock and for this the people loved him.

Wycliffe spoke against the doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine teaches that in the Lord's Supper, the bread and wine actually change into the body and blood of Jesus. Wycliffe said this was not true. How could it be that people who partake of the Lord's Supper are actually eating and drinking the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ? Wycliffe taught that Christ's body and blood are *represented* by the bread and the wine. This "new" doctrine taught by Wycliffe made some people uncomfortable and angry. Even King Edward III did not want to support Wycliffe anymore. He thought Wycliffe had gone too far. Many of the teachers, professors, and students at Oxford University also disagreed with Wycliffe, choosing rather to adhere to the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Earthquake Council

In 1381, the peasants revolted. Wycliffe was blamed for this uprising, although he had nothing to do with it. He was simply teaching the people about God's Word; he was not teaching rebellion and warfare. Because of all the unrest, another meeting was called. It became known as the Earthquake Council, because an earthquake occurred while the meeting was taking place. Wycliffe's friends believed God was showing His anger toward His enemies and hoped



Wycliffe tried at Oxford

it would help thwart his enemies from carrying out their evil plans. However, the meeting proceeded, and Wycliffe's doctrines and writings were condemned anyway.

Summoned again

In November 1382, Wycliffe was summoned before a council in Oxford. The university that had educated him now turned on him. He bravely spoke against the errors of the church. Wycliffe was weak due to his life of trials and ill health, but he was not afraid to speak the truth boldly. When he was finished, he simply said, "The truth shall prevail!" He then turned and left. No one dared to stop him.

Fewer and fewer people supported Wycliffe as he continued preaching and teaching. He must have been lonely at times, but he clung to his God and continued boldly in his attacks on the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. He used strong language that offended even some of his friends. In speaking about the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, he said, "How can you, O priest, who are only a man, make your Maker? What? The thing that grows in the fields today—the ear of wheat which you pluck today, shall that be God tomorrow?² As you cannot make the works which He made, how can you make Him who made the works? Woe to the adulterous generation that believes the words of the pope rather than of the gospel!"

He translates the Bible into English

Wycliffe's greatest work was his translation of the Scriptures. Before his time, there was no complete English

2. Wycliffe was referring to the wafer baked from wheat, which the Roman Catholic Church taught became the actual body of Christ during celebration of the Lord's Supper.

translation of the Bible. Parts of the Bible had been translated into English, but not the complete Bible. Wycliffe believed every person should have a copy of the Bible. Two hundred years after Waldo translated the Bible into French, God helped Wycliffe and a team of academic helpers translate the Bible from Latin into English. It was a very great work. Imagine copying out by hand the Bible as we know it today! With much prayer and patience, Wycliffe and his friends kept working on translating God's blessed Word for the people of England in their own language. As he worked, Wycliffe found instruction and comfort for his soul while providing for the spiritual good of many others. Finally, in 1380, the last verse of the New Testament was translated.

Perhaps you would like to try to read a passage of what Wycliffe's translation would have looked like. The people at that time spoke very different English from the English we speak today. To compare this passage with the one in your Bible, look at John 5:2–9.

and in ierusalem is a waischyng place / that
in ebrew is named bethsaida / and hath fyue
porchis / in these laie a greete multitude of sike
men / blinde / crokid / and drie / abidyng the
mouyng of the watir / for the aungel of the lord
came doum certeyn tymes in to the watir / and
the watir was moued / and he that first cam
down in to the sistterne aftir the mouyng of the
watir was made hool of what euer sikenesse he
was holden / and a man was there hauyng eiyte
and thritti yeer his sikeness / and whanne ihesus
hadde seen hym liggynge and hadde knowen
/ that he hadde myche tyme / he seith to him /
wolt thou be made hool / the sike man answerid



Wycliffe and the Lollards

to hym / lord i haue no man that whanne the
watir is moued to putte me in to the cisterne /
for the while i come / another goith doun bifor
me / ihesus seith to hym / rise up / take thi bed
and go / and anoon the man was made hool / and
tooke up his bedde and wente forth / and it was
saboth in that dai /

Did you notice that no capital letters are used and that the spellings of words are not only different from ours, but not always consistent? If you were to hear someone speak English as the people spoke it in the fourteenth century, you would hardly be able to understand it. Wycliffe's friend, Nicholas Hereford, helped with the translation of the Old Testament for the last three years of Wycliffe's life, and then he supervised the task until it was completed around the year 1388, more than three years after Wycliffe's death.

The Roman Catholic Church, of course, was not pleased with either the translation or the distribution of God's Word to the people. They said that it was casting pearls before swine when the common people read the Scriptures. They believed it was heresy to speak the words of Scripture in the English language. They told the people that they must trust the church's interpretation of the Bible rather than their own.

The Lollards

In addition to preaching and writing a large number of books on a great variety of subjects ranging from theology to philosophy and logic, Wycliffe trained a large number of men to help him in carrying on his call for reform. These men were also poor, like the poor men of Lyons, and went



The church at Lutterworth

all over the country, preaching the gospel in churchyards, at fairs, in marketplaces, in the streets, and wherever they could get people to come and hear them. Sometimes these men were called Lollards. In 1401, the Lollards were condemned by the pope as heretics, and some were burned at the stake.

His death

In spite of all his trials and persecutions, Wycliffe lived until the age of sixty. While he was preaching in his church at Lutterworth, he was seized with paralysis, which means he was not able to move. Today, the doctors might have called it a stroke. The attack was so severe that he was unable to speak and was utterly helpless. He lived two

days after this; then he died a calm and peaceful death on December 31, 1384.

Wycliffe was buried in the graveyard of his church at Lutterworth. Forty-four years after his death, his enemies dug up his bones, burned them to ashes, and threw the ashes into the Swift River. Afterward, someone said that just as Wycliffe's ashes were thrown into the river that eventually flows into the ocean, so the Word of God which he preached and translated will make its way all over the world. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain" (Psalm 76:10).

Though he never came to a clear understanding of the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone, Wycliffe was certainly one of the most important forerunners of the Reformation. This is why he is referred to as the Morning Star of the Reformation. His influence on the Reformers was very great. He especially influenced John Huss through the Lollards and the call for reform in Bohemia. The authority of the Bible, the importance of predestination, and the biblical doctrine of the Lord's Supper are several areas in particular that lie close to the heart of the Reformation. Wycliffe's contributions in teaching and writing about these doctrines can scarcely be overestimated.

Wycliffe's writings are still being studied today. The Wycliffe Society was founded in 1882 for the purpose of translating his writings into English. Between 1883 and 1921, they translated thirty-five of his books, but they never finished the task.

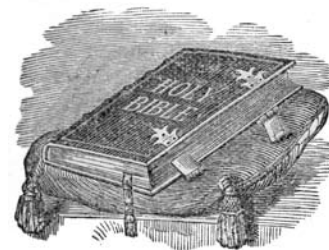
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Anne of Bohemia

(c. 1366–1394)

Queen of Richard II

Wycliffe was delighted to hear that the queen loved to read and study the Scriptures. He compared her to Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet to listen to what He had to say.



Her family

Anne of Bohemia¹ lived during the time of John Wycliffe and was a help to him and the Reformation. She was the eldest daughter of the Emperor Charles IV and the sister of King Wenceslaus, King of Bohemia and Emperor of Germany. Her mother was the fourth wife of Charles IV; the daughter of Beleslaus, Duke of Pomerania; and the granddaughter of Cassimir the Great, King of Poland. Anne was born in Prague, Bohemia, around the year 1366.

Her youth

Anne was taught the truths of Scripture from her youth. In Bohemia at that time, there were several ministers to whom the people listened eagerly. Their names were John Melice, Conrad Strickna, and Matthias Janovius. Anne was an intelligent young lady and asked many questions about the Scriptures and the truths in its pages. The Lord blessed her studies, and she not only learned much about the Scriptures and the errors of the church, but she loved the Author of the Scriptures.

Her marriage to Richard II

Richard II was the son of Edward, Prince of Wales. Sometimes he was called the Black Prince, because he wore dark-colored armor. His mother was Joan, of whom you read in the previous chapter. Richard was born in Bourdeaux,

¹. Bohemia is in the present-day Czech Republic.

France, in 1367. His father died in 1376 and his grandfather the following year, so Richard became king at the young age of ten.

When he was thirteen years old, he heard about Anne of Bohemia and thought she would be a good wife for him. In January 1382, when they were fifteen years old, Anne and Richard were married in St. Stephen's Chapel, Westminster. Although she had never met Richard, Anne had heard that the writings of John Wycliffe had begun a revival in England, so that fact encouraged her to go there to marry King Richard.

Anne as queen

Anne took friends and servants who were true believers with her to England. The people of England loved her immediately. She was gentle and kind. She tried to help the poor, the orphans, and widows. It is said that as many as six thousand people ate at the royal table every day, most of whom were poor! She thought about how Jesus had compassion on the crowds and fed them miraculously so that they wouldn't be hungry. Christians want to be like their Master, so that is why Anne wanted to help the needy. It is no wonder the people called her "good Queen Anne." King Richard was pleased with this kind queen and loved her very much.

In England, Anne continued to read and study the Scriptures. She had copies of the gospels in three languages: Bohemian, English, and Latin. In those days, even a page of Scripture was a treasure. Few people had ever seen a page

or a book of the Bible. The young queen was happy to have the gospels in these three languages.

Queen Anne was not afraid to talk about the Bible. She once spoke with Arundel, the Archbishop of York, and told him how she loved to read the Bible. Arundel, like most Roman Catholics in those days, did not appreciate the Bible and did not want people to read it. He was alarmed to hear that the queen owned copies of the gospels which she was reading, but he could say nothing since she was the queen of England.

Her friendship with Wycliffe

Wycliffe was delighted to hear that the queen loved to read and study the Scriptures. He compared her to Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet to listen to what He had to say. He was encouraged that she was reading an English translation of the gospels.

Queen Anne gave her protection to Wycliffe, since he had many enemies. Often she would go to her husband and gently plead with him on his behalf. She would read passages of Scripture to him, such as Matthew 23:34-35: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar." King Richard did not want to be guilty of killing one of God's prophets, so he listened to the



words of his loving wife. Sadly, Wycliffe lived only three years after Queen Anne came to live in England.

Her early death

In the spring of 1394, Queen Anne became ill of the plague. She weakened rapidly, and on June 7, she died. She was only twenty-seven years old. The King was devastated, and the people mourned deeply. It is said that Richard destroyed Sheen Palace where she had died. She is buried at Westminster, where Richard had a beautiful tomb made. Richard had a life of trouble, losing his crown and being imprisoned. If only he had fled to the Savior, he would have had a place of refuge! He died in 1400. Some years later he was buried beside his beloved Anne.

The Lord had His divine purpose in Queen Anne's life as well as in her death. After the young queen's death, many of her friends and servants returned to Bohemia. They took with them the translations of the gospels and some of the writings of Wycliffe that had been so treasured by Queen Anne. Some of these friends and servants had known the queen since she was a child and had learned many things about the Bible from her. Some of her friends remained in England to attend Oxford University, telling others what they had heard and learned from Queen Anne. The friends who returned to Bohemia told the people there about their beloved queen, and what she had taught them from Scripture. So the seeds of the Reformation were spread throughout Bohemia and England with the blessing of the Lord.