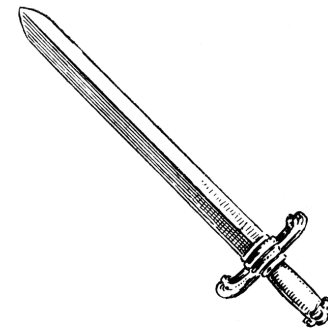


Faith of Our Fathers

Brief sketches of other
influential figures at the time of the Reformation

BUGENHAGEN – MELANCHTHON – JONAS
CRANACH – SPALATIN – CHEMNITZ



*Take the helmet of salvation and
the sword of the Spirit, which is
the word of God (Eph 6:17).*

These sketches were written by Rev. David Schaller and collected from the daily devotion archives at www.xrl.us/edevotions

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Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS: JOHN BUGENHAGEN

Slides 2-3 In early 16th century Germany the Lord God used the life and work of Martin Luther to shine a light on the central teaching of the Bible: We gain heaven not on account of our own good deeds, but because Jesus lived a perfect life and suffered for our sins. Yet while we refer to that period in history today as the "Lutheran" Reformation, the Holy Spirit was surely active in others besides Luther, leading them along the same path of discovery, uncovering for them too the precious truth of the gospel.

One of those others was John Bugenhagen. In 1504 at the age of 19, Bugenhagen became a teacher and the principal of the school in Treptow, a town on the Rega River in what is today northern Poland. As it happened, although his chosen career was not strictly theological in nature, he had much contact with the church through his students as well as through a nearby monastery. Eventually, at the urging of his friends and with an inner desire for the ministry growing within him, he studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1509 at the age of 24, becoming vicar of St. Mary's church in Treptow.

As a priest, Bugenhagen believed that a person could earn heaven through a series of good deeds and that he could make up for his own sins. He admitted later in an autobiographical commentary that before 1520 he attempted to achieve righteousness before God through good works and confession.

Slide 23 Chemnitz' pen was busy defending the Scriptures. He wrote a large four-volume work "The Examination of the Council of Trent" in which he responded to continuing errors in the Catholic Church. In 1560 he wrote extensively on the Lord's Supper and in 1570 on the two natures of Christ, answering the false teachings that had arisen. The Lord used him in particular, however, as the principal author of the Formula of Concord, a foundational document of the Lutheran Church. Written in 1577 and taking its stand on the Bible, the Formula of Concord restated the Christian teachings of the Reformation and brought about agreement among German Lutherans. It is still confessed by our churches today.

Slide 24 Martin Chemnitz died in 1586, but his life and work remind us that in every generation and in every age there will be those around us who hinder and obscure the gospel of Christ. We need to be on our guard and be ready to "contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." The gospel of justification by faith in Jesus is simply too precious to let go!

On the calendar of the Lutheran Church, Martin Chemnitz is remembered on November 9, the day of his birth.

Jude 3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS: MARTIN CHEMNITZ

Slide 21 Sometimes we might get the sense that the struggle for the truth of the gospel was essentially completed by the end of Martin Luther's life in 1546, as if after a generation the Protestants no longer tangled much with the Roman Church and most all of them were agreed on the teachings that the reformers had brought to light. But that was far from the reality of things. The central Scriptural truth of "salvation by grace — through faith — on account of Christ" as well as the idea that the Bible is God's authoritative word were points of contention even among the Protestants themselves in the decades after Luther.

Slide 22 Several significant controversies arose among the Protestants. False teachers promoted corrupt doctrines concerning the Lord's Supper and the person of Christ. There were others who claimed that salvation was not entirely a free gift from God but depended in part on the deeds of man. Human reason threatened to take precedence over clear passages of Scripture. A "second Martin" was needed to remind everyone again to stand on the truth of the Bible -- and the Lord provided one.

Martin Chemnitz was born in 1522. He took his schooling in many different cities in Germany, including Wittenberg and Koenigsberg, where he received his Master's degree in 1548. In 1554 he was made a member of the faculty at the University of Wittenberg. He was ordained into the ministry on November 25, 1554 by none other than John Bugenhagen.

Slide 4 What changed in 1520? That was the year Luther's essay on "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" was published. This was the work that convinced Bugenhagen he needed to study carefully what the Bible taught about salvation by faith. The Holy Spirit led Bugenhagen to see this truth of Scripture and he found himself in agreement with Luther. In 1521 he moved to Wittenberg, Luther's hometown. While Martin was away at the Diet of Worms delivering his famous "Here I Stand" address, Bugenhagen taught his classes at the university.

Slides 5-6 In 1523 Bugenhagen became pastor of St. Mary's church in Wittenberg. Thus he became Luther's pastor and the Lord used him to help shepherd Luther around the many spiritual pitfalls and dangers that beset him. Bugenhagen was always a pastor at heart, shepherding the church of God which Christ had bought with his own blood. He did not have the analytical mind of a Luther or a Melancthon, but he was a gifted organizer and contributed greatly to preserving unity in the early days of the Lutheran church. He died in 1558 at the age of 73, a pastor in Wittenberg to the last.

(To read more about John Bugenhagen, try the brief biography by Walter Ruccius available free of charge online: <http://archive.org/details/johnbugenhagenpo00rucc>)

Romans 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS: PHILIP MELANCHTHON

Slide 7 There are some who think that confessions of faith such as the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed are not necessary. They

say things like, "We just follow the Bible, we don't need to say anything more than that." In reality, however, this is not workable. For as Scripture says, "... many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). It is often very important to know just what is in a person's heart because there are so many false teachers who claim to "follow the Bible."

Slide 8 Philip Melanchthon worked tirelessly during the decades of the Reformation in Germany to write down exactly what the Lutherans had come to know and believe from the Scriptures. These confessions were not a substitute for the word of God, but they served to show others that what the Lutherans were preaching and teaching was actually in agreement with the word of God.

Slides 9-10 In 1530 Emperor Charles V invited the Protestants to a meeting at Augsburg. Some were hesitant to attend, suspecting deceit on the part of the Emperor, but a confession of faith was prepared by Melanchthon and was read aloud at the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530. Known today as the Augsburg Confession, it has become one of the most important documents in the history of the Christian church. It is known especially for its fourth article which summarizes what the Bible teaches about faith and salvation:

"Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4" (Augsburg Confession, Article IV).

Frederick's trust and become his private secretary in charge of all personal and official correspondence.

Already in 1511 Spalatin was studying his Bible at Luther's urging and by 1518 he had become convinced of the truth of the gospel and how it was being hindered and suppressed by the practices of the church. Many of those practices are familiar to us: the buying and selling of indulgences whereby people paid money to speed their journey to heaven, the veneration of saints and relics to gain God's favor, and the teaching that faith in Christ alone is not enough for salvation.

Slide 20 As Luther's devoted friend and a supporter of those who wished to reform the church, Spalatin was instrumental in convincing Elector Frederick to protect Luther from those who would harm him. When Luther was called to appear before the church on charges of heresy, Spalatin urged Frederick to insist that the meeting should take place in Germany. This likely saved Luther's life. After that famous Diet at Worms in 1521 when Luther was declared an outlaw worthy of death, it was Spalatin who arranged to have him "kidnapped" and kept safe in the Wartburg Castle. Because of all the work he did in political circles on behalf of the Protestant cause, Spalatin is sometimes referred to as the "helmsman of the Reformation," and it may not be too much to say that it would not have happened without him. He went to be with His Savior on January 16, 1545 at the age of 61.

Some of God's greatest blessings to us are the friends He gives us. Luther found a true friend in Spalatin. We appreciate the friends who surround us. Especially do we give thanks for our greatest Friend, the Lord Jesus Christ. For He is the Friend who laid down His life for us sinners so that we would not suffer eternally.

Along with his painting, Cranach was in the printing business. And if you were to suspect that his presses were busy turning out copy after copy of Luther's writings, you would be right. His artwork, his printing company, his fame, his service as Wittenberg's mayor (many times) and as a highly respected town council member placed him in a unique position which God then used to bless those who were contending for the faith during those tumultuous years.

Lucas Cranach died in 1553 at Weimar, Germany. The calendar of the Lutheran Church remembers him on April 6.

Proverbs 27:9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS: GEORGE SPALATIN

Slide 19 Some 400 letters from Martin Luther to George Spalatin survive today, making clear that the two were very close friends during the difficult years of the Reformation. Luther counseled Spalatin and Spalatin counseled Luther. Spalatin was a faithful friend in the right place at the right time.

George Spalatin was born in 1484 and gained his Bachelor's degree from the University of Erfurt, Germany, in 1499. He pursued his Master's degree at Wittenberg, completing it in 1503. Until 1508 his biography is fairly usual for an academic of his day, but his life soon took a most important turn. In 1509 Frederick the Wise called on him to tutor his son. Elector Frederick was the Emperor's representative in and around Wittenberg, a region known as Saxony. So Spalatin was suddenly rubbing shoulders with those in high levels of government and with an important and influential man. It was not too long before he had gained

Psalms 119:148 My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS: JUSTUS JONAS

Slide 11 Some people have an exceptional ability to study and learn. We might refer to them as scholars, and Justus Jonas was one. Born in 1493, Jonas studied law and theology at the University of Erfurt, one of the best universities in Germany. (The same place where Martin Luther had begun his study of law.) In 1510 he received his Master of Arts degree and in 1517 he accepted positions at St. Severus Church (as a Canon) and as a professor at the University of Erfurt.

Slide 12 We picture Jonas studying late into the night preparing for his classes. He introduced Greek and Hebrew into the curriculum at Erfurt and was eventually named head of the university. Jonas' aptitude for scholarship served him well as he studied the Scriptures and read the writings of the Reformation. A person is declared righteous by faith in Christ alone apart from good works— Salvation in heaven is given as a free gift from God — the teachings of the Bible are authoritative above the ideas and customs of men — Jonas came to believe these truths.

Slide 13 He became a close friend of Martin Luther while serving as Dean of the Theological Faculty at the University of Wittenberg from 1523-1533. Jonas was the professor of the professors.

When Luther made his historic translation of the Bible into German so the common people could have the word of God in their own language, Justus Jonas was on hand, an indispensable help to Luther as they pored over the Greek and Hebrew texts together, meditating on the promises of God, their eyes no doubt

at times staying open even through the long watches of the night. Jonas further translated many of Luther's Latin works into German, including the well-known tract "The Bondage of the Will." He also helped prepare Luther's metrical versions of the Psalms, and appears to have written the hymn on Psalm 124, "If God Had Not Been on Our Side," which is sometimes attributed to Luther.

Slide 14 In January of 1546 it was Justus Jonas who accompanied Martin Luther to Eisleben to help solve an argument there over an inheritance between two heirs of a deceased Count. But at Eisleben, Luther fell terribly ill and would not survive. Justus Jonas was at his side and asked him, "Reverend Father are you willing to die in the name of Christ and the doctrine which you have preached?" Luther answered, "Yes." Shortly afterward, he was gone.

Jonas preached at Luther's first funeral service in Eisleben on February 19, 1546. He preached of the resurrection of the dead and the life to come in Christ Jesus. The sermon still survives and today you can read it here:

<http://archive.org/details/cu31924029250467>

Romans 12:4-6a Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS: LUCAS CRANACH (The Elder)

Slide 15 Lucas Cranach was not a theological scholar like Justus

Jonas. He could not summarize Scriptural truth brilliantly like Philip Melanchthon. He was not a trained pastor as John Bugenhagen was, but he stands as a reminder that Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church, so often uses the gifts of Christian laymen when He carries out His kingdom work. And Cranach certainly had talents and abilities which He put to very good use in the service of His Savior.

Slides 16-17 He was born in Germany in 1472, in a region known as Franconia. He was the son of a professional artist and followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a painter himself. So good was his work that in 1504 he came to Wittenberg and became the court artist for Duke Frederick, ruler of Saxony, whose fair-minded policies later helped Martin Luther and the cause of the Reformation greatly.

Slide 18 In 1508 he painted altar pieces for Wittenberg's Castle Church (where Luther would later preach) and his paintings of Biblical scenes became well known. Cranach became a famous artist and very wealthy. His painting of Martin Luther stands to this day as one of the most recognizable portraits in all the history of art. God used Cranach's talents to add beauty to His world and to teach Bible lessons to many thousands through pictures. Cranach provided the woodcuts for the first German translation of the New Testament in 1522.

Lucas Cranach became a good friend of Martin Luther's and was moved by the gospel of the forgiveness of sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He took his spiritual stand with those who taught that eternal life was a free gift, not earned or deserved by our own works, but bought and paid for by the death of our Lord. His allegiance was with the reformers. It was Cranach and his wife Barbara who, in fact, served as witnesses at Luther's wedding.