



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

This month is special to Americans as we honor all those military personnel who have died for our freedom. In World War 1 and World War 2 alone, over 515,000 men and women gave their lives fighting for the freedoms that we enjoy today. What a staggering and sobering number! As I thought on this high price for our political freedom, my mind went to the cost Jesus paid for our spiritual freedom. Paul says in Galatians 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us - for it is written, 'cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.'" It is right and good for us to rejoice in our political freedoms. But let us not forget to rejoice in the eternal freedom from sin and death that is graciously given to us through the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord.



Over the years, the Lord has given the Romaines and the Burdetts many shared experiences. In addition to graduating from the same Bible college, Jonathan and Caleb are both graduates of VBTS (2011 & 2016 respectively). Now their families have partnered together as missionaries to Logroño, Spain. Logroño is a tourist city of 150,000 people. Each year, over 200,000 religious world-travelers visit Logroño as part of their spiritual journey. For all the religious activity in this city, less than 1% of the population have peace with God through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Romaines and Burdetts are burdened to reach these people with the Gospel. Jonathan writes, "We stick out like a sore thumb in a different culture. All this is a constant reminder that it is Christ, not us, who builds His church - this moves and excites us. We get to be a part of *what He is doing!*" We give thanks to God for calling these two godly and energetic couples to Spain.



Special Reformation Spotlight: Balthasar Hubmaier

Dr. Michael Windsor, VBTS Professor of Historical Theology

This year marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Historians use the event of the posting of the *Ninety-Five Theses* on the Wittenberg Chapel door by Martin Luther on October 31, 1517, to mark the beginning of the Reformation. Luther was willing to defend “justification by faith” against the practice of selling indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church. Luther was quickly embroiled in a controversy over justification and the question of authority for his position. As a consequence the Reformation quickly became a “back-to-the-Bible” movement (*sola Scriptura*).

The Reformation spread across Germany. One man influenced both by Luther and by Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, Switzerland, was Balthasar Hubmaier. Hubmaier was a Catholic priest in Waldshut on the Rhine River (many of the early Reformers were Catholic priests when the Reformation began). He was well educated for his day; he had received an M.A. from the University of Freiburg and a Th.D. from the University of Ingolstadt. Nevertheless, under the influence of the Scriptures, Hubmaier came first to embrace the Reformation and justification by faith and subsequently embraced Anabaptism and the concept of a believers’ church. He and the church at Waldshut inaugurated a series of reforms, including the removal of statues from the church building, church services in the German language, and believer’s baptism. Additionally, Hubmaier took a wife. These reforms drew the attention of both the secular and church authorities in the Holy Roman Empire, and an army was sent to Waldshut to forcibly restore Catholicism. While the villagers were willing to fight for their pastor, Hubmaier felt it appropriate to withdraw from the town so that no blood would be shed. He crossed the Rhine River and sought refuge in Zurich.

While Zurich was experiencing its own reformation, the city and its prime reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, had rejected Anabaptism. Rather than being welcomed, Hubmaier was arrested, tortured, and forced to sign a compromising document. He was then exiled from Zurich. After a period of wandering, Hubmaier found refuge in Moravia. He pastored there for nearly two years while writing and publishing literature supportive of his theological convictions (including a pamphlet battle with Ulrich Zwingli over the issue of believer’s baptism). Many of his pamphlets concluded with a line that was his personal motto: “Truth is immortal.”

The Catholic Church was eager to have Hubmaier arrested for three reasons: 1) he had been an ordained Catholic priest; 2) he was well educated (Th. D.); and 3) his writings were influential among the growing Anabaptist movement. The pressure of the Church resulted in Hubmaier’s arrest in the middle of 1527. He was taken to Vienna and imprisoned for nine months as Church officials sought to force him to recant. Unable to get Hubmaier to recant, he was condemned by the Church and burned at the stake on March 10, 1528. Three days later Hubmaier’s wife, Elsbeth, was taken to a bridge over the Danube River, tied to rocks, and pushed into the river. Both husband and wife had sealed their devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word with their lives. *Truth is immortal.*