

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

Second Edition, with Study Questions

by Diana Kleyn with Joel R. Beeke

Illustrated by Caffy Whitney and others

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



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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; Michael Haykin for his helpful suggestions on Chapter 32 for this second edition; 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.

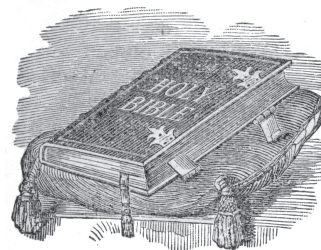
— DK/JRB

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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.