

“You Have the Pound”

“You Have the Pound”
Exhortation *to* Read *the* Holy Scriptures
and Other Prefaces, Discourses, *and* Correspondence
from 1524

JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS

Translated, introduced, *and* annotated *by*
TIMOTHY MATTHEW SLEMMONS

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*With gratitude to the Triune God
for the Word Incarnate, encoded, and entrusted to the Church,
and for the Spirit who awakens, inspires, corrects, edifies, and
gives hope and perseverance to the saints.*

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I wish to thank my students and faculty colleagues for bearing with my enthusiasm for this project over the years. Absent long periods to give it the focus and attention it deserves, however, one must smuggle such enterprises into the fabric of daily life, where they tend to show up in conversation perhaps more frequently than would seem warranted. But patience is the fourth listed fruit of the Spirit, and I am grateful whenever it is extended in my direction. This applies especially to my wife Victoria, for whom I thank the Triune God most heartily and with unending gratitude.

—TMS

Abbreviations

- ADB* *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 56 Vols. (1875—1912).
- Allen* *Opus epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami*, recollected once more and enlarged by P. S. Allen, et al., 12 Vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1906—1958).
- Bardenhewer* Otto Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, 5 Vols. (Freiburg im Briesgau: Herder, 1902–1913).
- Baum* Johann Wilhelm Baum, *Capito und Butzer, Straßburgs Reformatoren*, in *Leben und ausgewählte Schriften der Väter und Begründer der reformierten Kirche* (Elberfeld: Friderichs, 1860).
- BBR* *Das Buch der Basel Reformation: Zu ihrem vierhundertjährigen Jubiläum in Namen der evangelischen Kirchen von Stadt und Landschaft Basel* [*The Book of the Basel Reformation: For its Four-hundredth Jubilee in the Name of the Evangelical Churches of the City and Region of Basel*], ed. Ernst Staehelin (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1929)
- Beiträge* Ernst Staehelin, *Bibliographische Beiträge zum Lebenswerk Oekolampads* [*Bibliographical Contributions to the Life's Work of Oecolampadius*] in: *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* [*Basel Journal for History and Archaeology*], Vol. 27 [1928].
- Bigelmair* Andreas Bigelmair, “Der Briefwechsel von Oekolampadius mit Veit Bild,” in *Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte*, Vol. 40 [1922], pp. 117-135.
- Clemen, Beiträge* Otto Clemen, *Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte aus Büchern und Handschriften der Zwickauer Ratsschulbibliothek* (Berlin: C.A. Schwetschke, 1900-1903).

- Clemen, *Mel.* Melanchthon, Philipp, and Otto Clemen. 1926. *Supplementa Melanchthoniana 6.I, Melanchthons Briefwechsel, 1510-1528*. Herausgegeben von D. Dr. Otto Clemen. Leipzig: M. Heinsius Nachfolger Eger & Sievers.
- Clericus *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami opera omnia*, ed. Johannes Clericus [Jean Le Clerc], 10 Vols., 1703ff.
- CR *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vols. 1—28: *Philippi Melanthonis opera omnia* (1835 —1860); Vols. 29—87: *Joannis Calvinii opera omnia* (1863 —1900); Vols. 88—101: *Huldreich Zwinglis sämtliche Werke* (1905—1959)
- Dürr *Aktensammlung zur Geschichte der Basler Reformation in den Jahren 1510 bis Anfang 1534*, ed. Emil Dürr, Vol. 1. [1921]
- Enders *Dr. Martin Luthers Briefwechsel*, ed. Ernst Ludwig Enders, Gustav Kawerau, Paul Flemming, Otto Albrecht, 18 Vols. (1884—1923).
- Epp. 1536 (1548) *Joannis Oecolampadii et Huldrici Zvinglii epistolarum libri quatuor* [Basel, 1536] (*Oek-Bib*, No. 182) along with the new edition of the same printing of 1548 (*Oek-Bib*, No. 202).
- Epp. 1592 *Monumentum instaurati patrum memoria per Helvetiam regni Christi et renascentis evangelii, id est: epistolarum D. Johannis Oecolampadii et Huldrici Zvinglii aliorumque eximiorum Jesu Christi servorum libri IIII* [Basel, 1592] (*Oek-Bib*, No. 226).
- ES Ernst Staehelin (1889—1980)
- FYB Johannes Oecolampadius, *The First Year in Basel*, translated, introduced, and annotated by Timothy Matthew Slemmons (B&NPress, 2023).
- Hagenbach Karl Rudolf Hagenbach, *Johann Oekolampad und Oswald Myconius, die Reformatoren Basels*, in: *Leben und ausgewählte Schriften der Väter und Begründer der reformierten Kirche, 2 Theil* (Elberfeld: R. L. Friderichs, 1859).
- Herzog Johann Jakob Herzog, *Das Leben Johannes Oekolampads und die Reformation der Kirche zu Basel*, 2 Vols. [in one] (Basel: Schweighauser'schen Buchhandlung, 1843).
- JO Johannes Oecolampadius (1482—1531)
- Kaegi Werner Kaegi, "Hutten und Erasmus," in *Historische Vierteljahrschrift*, Annuals 22–23 [1924/1925] p. 200 ff., 461 ff.
- MSG *Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca* (—1439), curated by J. P. Migne, Vol. 161 (1857—1866).
- OBA (I and II) Ernst Staehelin, *Briefe und Akten zum Leben Oekolampads, zum vierhundertjährigen Jubiläum der Basler Reformation*. 2 vols. *Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte 10, 19* (Leipzig: Heinsius, 1927–34).

- Oek-Bib Ernst Staehelin, *Oekolampad-Bibliographie*, 2. unveränderte Auflage (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1963).
- Return to God Timothy Matthew Slemmons, *Return to God: Historical and Modern Confessional Sources for the Renewal and Regathering of the Church* (Independently published, 2020).
- RE₃ *Realencyklopaedie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, ed. J. J. Herzog, in dritter und vermehrter Auflage [in a third and expanded edition] ed. Albert Hauck, 24 Vols. (1896 — 1913).
- SOR Johannes Oecolampadius, *Sown on Rock: The Sermon on the Vernacular and the Correspondence with Hedio*, translated, introduced, and annotated by Timothy Matthew Slemmons (B&NPress, 2022).
- STZ₃₃ Ernst Staehelin, “Väterübersetzungen” [“Translations of the Fathers”], in *Schweizerische Theologische Zeitschrift* [Swiss Theological Journal], Vol. XXXIII, ed. Aug[ust] Waldburger (Zürich: von Beer, 1916), pp. 57–91. [See SOR, Supplement for ET.]
- TLJO Ernst Staehelin, *Das Theologische Lebenswerk Johannes Oekolampads. Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte XXI* (Leipzig: M. Heinsius, 1939).
- Thurnhofer Franz Xaver Thurnhofer, *Bernhard Adelman von Adelmansfelden, Humanist und Luthers Freund (1473 —1523)* in: *Erläuterungen und Ergänzungen zu Janssens Geschichte des deutschen Volkes*, ed. Ludwig Pastor (Freiburg im Briesgau: Herdersche, 1900).
- WA *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: 1883ff.

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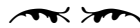
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“You Have the Pound”

Translator's Introduction

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With his *Sermons on the First Epistle of John* freshly delivered in December 1523, Oecolampadius evidently returned to his exposition of First Corinthians that he had suspended some time earlier, midway through the letter. Although we do not have the remains of that series, we know the seventh chapter of the epistle was fresh in his mind, because, as his second year in Basel (1524) begins with his participation in Stephan Stor's disputation on the marriage of priests, he mentions it in the first of two addresses delivered on that occasion. Nuptial themes were also very much at play in a sermon attributed to him and likely delivered in mid-January on the Second Sunday after Epiphany, a sermon on the miracle at the wedding in Cana (though the year and the source of this sermon are somewhat uncertain).

Likewise in the first quarter of the year, in March, one of his most popular and widely used works emerges, his translation of Theophylact's commentary on the Gospels, while the similarly popular series, the exposition of IJohn, appears in print at mid-year, around the time his famous lectures on Isaiah were wrapping up. By August, with a new

series on Romans commencing, a second important foreword accompanies Johann Bebel’s economical Greek New Testament, an “Exhortation to the Read the Holy Scriptures,” in which the Reformer informs the reader: “See, you have the pound.” What the industrious expositor means is that the Word itself is the parable’s first pound or talent, with which the servant of the Word is to either trade and double his holdings or face the shameful consequences of burying what has been entrusted. He says as much again in the first of three letters to Farel, written in the same month, which together constitute a brief, but inspiring model of pastoral instruction, in this case, addressed to a brilliant, but intimidating zealot. With this short, simple statement, however, we gain a clear and unmistakable view into Oecolampadius’ own sense of vocation, who is investing his pound with breathtaking diligence and productivity and summons every other evangelist and servant of the Word to do the same.

Farel, however, is not the only Francophone addressed in his correspondence this year, but a spate of French connections opens up: Oecolampadius sends of a gift copy of the IJohn sermons to King Francis I’s chamberlain Morolet du Museau;¹ letters arrive from supporters in Meaux; two new Paris editions of his Chrysostom translations appear, all of which testify (directly or indirectly) to the Reformer’s growing influence on a whole new front.

Among his other 1524 correspondence included here, e.g., with Capito, Zwingli, Luther, Melanchthon, Brenz, et al., perhaps most notable is the urgent letter he and Zwingli received from Strasbourg regarding Karlstadt’s controversial pamphlets on the sacraments. By the end of the year, we find Oecolampadius mounting the first response, both in pulpit and in print, a full year before Luther’s rejoinder in *The Bondage of the Will*, to Erasmus’ *Diatribes* asserting the freedom of the will.

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That, in brief, is the year in review. But let us survey each grouping in more detail.

Sermons and deliberations on marriage

The first group of sources, spanning the period from Christmas of 1523 through February 1524, is dominated by the question of marriage, specifically the marriage of priests. Here the one sermon in the collection, itself difficult to date and even somewhat questionable as to its authenticity, concern the Wedding at Cana. Clearly it is a January sermon, as it takes its title from the “Octave after the Feast of the Magi,” i.e., the Second Sunday after Epiphany, when the Gospel text for the day was commonly John 2:1-12, as it is here. The published title is obscure and misleading, as it references the calendar of feast days rather than the text per se. Multiple misspellings of the Reformer’s name cast some doubt on the authenticity of the work. Nevertheless, the first interpretive move in the sermon certainly seems to align with what Jeff Fisher has aptly described as “Christoscopic,” whereby the mystery of Christological revelation is distinguished from the historical sense of the text. In fact, the preacher quickly labels the miracle as the literal meaning of the text and affirms it, but since Christ did not come to earth in order to merely turn water into wine, he proceeds to the higher sense, according to which Christ is every character in the scene:

He is the bridegroom, and is at the same time the steward; he is the Lord and he is the servant. He gives the wine, and pours the wine, and he himself is the vine whence the wine, and is himself the wine whence the joy and every delight, and is even the marital joy, sufficient for the blessing of all creatures.

We are those in need of the grace that Jesus provides when he turns the water into wine, the water being ...

Oecolampadius § “*You Have the Pound*”

Pure, fresh, spring water, or cistern water collected from the rains of heaven. That is, from the holy scriptures, of the new and the old commandments, and that according to its native sense and understanding. All other water by comparison is cloudy sludge and puddle water.

The preacher associates that “other water” with human teaching, in which we find degrees of clarity, depending on how closely the teacher (Augustine, Jerome, et al.) holds to divine teaching, but the fourth book of Lombard’s sentences, he contends, “pours nothing but slime.” In short, the preacher asserts in the spirit of *sola scriptura*: “The worldly does not belong in the pulpit.”

The allusion to puddle water is interesting, however, as we find Hedio using it similarly in the Foreword to his German translation of the Oecolampadius’ IJohn sermons,² where human doctrines are likened to “desert puddles and dung pools.” Might Hedio be the preacher of this sermon? While it is possible, it is also unlikely. He most certainly was an opportunistic borrower, but it is difficult to imagine him using another’s name to pass off his own work. It is much more in keeping with his style to repeat what he has gleaned from his more astute colleagues, which probably argues more for Oecolampadius’ authorship here, as well as for Hedio’s having read the sermon at hand, i.e., as a work of his elder colleague.

As for the remainder of the sermon, the preacher declares his intention to pour out or dispense the pure water of faith, like the servants at the wedding, that the Lord might work his miracle with it. The doctrines of the Trinity, God’s provision for his creation, the Incarnation and atonement, the church and the Great Commandment, all these and more are dispensed, one “jar” after another: “I have poured water, he makes of it wine.” Indeed, the preacher even mentions those who will claim too much for human works done with free will—a topic that will

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become of increasing concern in the year ahead—but he speaks to Christ in a prayerful irruption: “But you, Lord Jesus, ... you do the work, ...” We should note the striking similarity between this appeal and the final blessing with which Sermon 21, and with it, the entire series on 1John, concluded only three weeks prior (assuming the year of the present sermon on John 2 is correct): “I pray that we would recognize this true light and also our darkness, that we would know Christ who is the way to the Father and remain upon this way through faith, so that he too would remain in us in all eternity and do the works. Amen.”³ As Staehelin summarizes: “The content of the sermon is not such that one must dispute the authorship of Oecolampadius”; nevertheless, the circumstances around its publication suggest it was released without the Reformer’s direct involvement. (See the SUPPLEMENT to this volume for the relevant passage from Staehelin’s biography.)

Three letters from the period, largely unrelated to the theme of marriage, are included here nevertheless. The first is from Pirckheimer (*OBA I*, No. 182), writing from Nuremberg, who poignantly remarks on the recent death of their mutual friend Bernard Adelman, who had played such an instrumental role in the Reformer’s development and whose death arguably marks the close of his formative stage. Interestingly, however, it was Pirckheimer who had alerted Oecolampadius six and a half months earlier of his encounter with a pseudo-Oecolampadius trying to pass himself and his dubious literature off as originals.⁴ The second letter, from Melanchthon (*OBA I*, No. 183), is dated two days prior to the disputation on marriage. Though brief, and primarily concerned that Oecolampadius should speak a calming word in the direction of Zurich where an iconoclastic spirit had taken hold, Melanchthon’s appeal proceeds from his conviction that “we do not understand the power of Christian freedom,” and this sentiment certainly seems to make itself

heard in Oecolampadius’ remarkably moderate comments on marriage. A two-day delivery from Wittenberg to Basel would certainly be quick, but there is no reason to rule out the possibility that Oecolampadius may have just received and read it and had it freshly in mind at the disputation. A third letter (*OBA I*, No. 186), written to Zwingli after the disputation on marriage, tells of plans to have the proceedings printed. Here we have the first mention of Farel as “that Gaul” whose points of disputation are being sent to Zwingli. The authors of the letter are Bonifacius Wolfhart and Oecolampadius, but the pen is clearly in the hand of the former who sings the praises of Oecolampadius as the latter would never have done for himself. The letter was evidently hastily scribbled on a sermon manuscript of Oecolampadius!

As for the Disputation itself, the precipitating circumstances surround the desire of Stephan Stor, the pastor of Liestal, to publicly acknowledge his ten-year cohabitation and to have permission of the Basel council to marry, at which he was deposed by the cathedral chapter. In the disputation that followed on February 16, 1524, he argues that he finds nothing in scripture to prohibit it, but only blessings attached to marriage, not least as a check on fornication. The reader will find a fuller explanation and an excerpt of Stor’s argument in the SUPPLEMENT than we will undertake here. Apart from Stor, Oecolampadius is the only speaker to offer two addresses, which are first after Stor’s opening argument and last before his conclusion. In the first address, Oecolampadius attempts to strike an agnostic posture; he is there to listen and hear what others have to say. He cites Paul against those who prohibit marriage (1Tim 4:1-3), but also mentions his recent preaching on 1Corinthians, “from Christmas up to the fast,” and specifically his recent exposition of chapter seven. Rather than reiterate that Pauline guidance in full, however—the disputation is held in

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Basel, after all, where his sermons will have been heard already by many in attendance—he strikes a humble posture, not wishing to condemn any, but calling all to humble confession of the truth, that is, of Christ the Truth. In short, the address becomes more a reminder that all are called to confess the Truth of Jesus Christ; he desires all preachers to be chaste.

I wholeheartedly wish and desire of our Lord Jesus that all of us who preach the Word of God would possess the noble estate of true chastity, in purity of spirit and body; thereby may we, without hindrance, adhere inseparably to the Word of God and perform the service our Lord in the most Christian way possible.

With continual appeal to the superiority of God's wisdom in the scriptures to human wisdom and reminders of God's grace toward his people, particularly toward those who are grateful for his gifts, Oecolampadius is sufficiently open to Stor's theses that he does not dispute them; rather, his insistently Christological and even Trinitarian approach, by way of the texts he mentions, suggests he is quite open to the possibility that marriage is not only part of God's design for creation, but also the means by which preachers should keep themselves chaste.

In the second address, Oecolampadius reminds the assembly "into what freedom Christ our Lord has purchased us," and asserts the importance of respecting the sanctifying work of Christ in preparing a bride for himself through baptism and repentance. Moreover, if, as Paul says, an unbelieving spouse may be sanctified through marriage to a believer,

should we, if we also find a woman who is penitent and eager for a Christian life, reject her? Ah, no, it should not be that we are so strict.

In the end, despite his initial claims to neutrality and openness on the matter, and without ever dealing directly with the particulars of the Stor case, the Reformer arrives at a permissive stance: as long as one seeks to honor Christ through repentance and to live a truly holy form of life, in keeping with the gifts one has received from God.

Foreword to Theophylact

Staehelin’s bibliography lists no less than thirteen editions, issued over a period of twenty years, of Oecolampadius’ popular translation of Theophylact commentary or compendium on the four Gospels. In his Foreword, he defends the Bulgarian for his concise style and even commends him for that very reason as being extremely useful. Certainly, he admits this “more recent” of so many Greek authorities was as much a collector and compiler of previous comments, but no doubt he sees something of his own industry in that of his predecessor and likewise appreciates him for the chief source on which his industry relies:

He seems like a little bee in the midst of honey-making in its beehive, collecting the more proven opinions from many authorities, but drawing especially from Chrysostom, as from his golden fountain, the most notable golden interpretations, so that in this compendium you would need very little to explain their Gospels, those things that he had discovered in winding books.

Indeed, Oecolampadius will go on to acknowledge the limitations of his labor, the scant few months spent on the project, the other obligations that would not have allowed him to embellish, even if had wanted to. His aim has been to render a faithful translation, not to force out a quality or an authority that is not there: “I have acted as translator, not as dogmatist.” Nevertheless, the working copy from which he has translated has