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CASIODORO DE REINA:

A BRIEF REVIEW OF HIS LIFE AND LEGACY

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Introduction

Most church history literature neglects the reformers in the southern European nations such as Spain and Italy. The work of Casiodoro de Reina (1520?-1594), Cipriano de Valera (1532?-1602?), Juan Perez de Pineda (1500-1567), and other Spaniards are rarely discussed and yet their efforts in the 16th century continue to affect the proclamation of the Gospel in Spanish-speaking nations in the present. In 1569, Casiodoro de Reina became the first to translate the entire Bible into Spanish. Reina's great contribution to the growth of the universal church is worthy of study and inclusion in the teaching of church history.

From Birth to Escape from San Isidoro: 1520-1557

Edward Boehmer estimates the year of Casiodoro de Reina's birth to be 1520¹. The Inquisition records place his birth in Montemolín located in the western Spanish province of Extremadura but others place his birth in the town of Reina about 20 miles east of Montemolín.

He studied at the University of Seville. After graduation he was ordained as a priest and entered the Observantine Hieronymite² monastery of San Isidoro del Campo located in the town of Santiponce just northwest of the city of Seville. The Observantine Hieronymite Order was named after St. Jerome, a hermit and the translator of the Vulgate Bible and emphasized work and service over study. The prior of the monastery, García Arias, had been influenced by the teachings of the priest of the main cathedral in Seville, Juan Gil or Dr. Egidio as he is otherwise known. García Arias had encouraged the monks to study the scriptures and had eliminated many of their rituals until Dr. Egidio was arrested by the Inquisition in 1553. García Arias then made an about face and returned to the old Roman Catholic practices but the monks were already influenced and did not revert to their previous doctrines.

¹Edward Boehmer, *Bibliotheca Wiffeniana – Spanish Reformers of Two Centuries*, 3 Vols, (London/Strasbourg, 1874-1904, reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, 1962) Vol.2, 165

²Gordon A Kinder, *Casiodoro de Reina: Spanish Reformer of the Sixteenth Century*, (London: Tamesis Books Limited, 1975) 11

During this time a group of about 800 residents of Seville³ with Calvinist beliefs had begun to meet in three homes. Reina assisted the leader, Dr. Cristóbal de Losada a medical doctor, with the teaching and led many to salvation by faith alone both at the house churches and at the monastery. The monks at San Isidoro became aware of the Inquisition's interest in the Seville area and began to leave in small groups so as not to draw attention to their departure. The members of the Seville house church chose to stay for unknown reasons. Only 12 monks out of the 24 were able to leave by October of 1557. Among those who escaped to Geneva were, Casiodoro de Reina, Cipriano de Valera, Alfonso del Corro and Francisco Farías.

Juan Perez de Pineda, a former ambassador of King Charles V to Rome, had also come to accept Calvinism and left Seville for Geneva in the early 1550's. There he translated the New Testament into Spanish in 1556. He participated in the smuggling of Calvinist books into Spain with the help of Julian Hernandez, a printer's assistant, also known as Julianillo due to his small stature. Julianillo smuggled these books and possibly Perez' Spanish New Testaments in wine casks. Unfortunately, he was captured by the Inquisition in October, 1557, after an anti-papal book, *Imagen del Antecristo*, had been mistakenly delivered to a priest who was unfriendly to Protestants. Julianillo's arrest led to the imprisonment of the members of the Seville house church and of the remaining monks of San Isidoro. In December, 1560, Julianillo, and many others were burned at the stake at an *auto de fe* in Seville. Later, in Seville, in April, 1562, the effigies of Reina, Valera, del Corro were also burnt in an *auto de fe*.

Geneva to the Publication of *La Biblia del Oso* 1558-1569

When Casiodoro de Reina, Cipriano de Valera, Antonio del Corro and the others arrived in Geneva by 1558 they first attended church services among the Italians of the city. But they later joined Juan Perez de Pineda who had started a Spanish church. Reina however was not happy in Geneva. He often wept when he saw Champel Hill the place where Miguel Servet (Micheal Servetus), a Spaniard

³ Kinder, 10

from Aragon and a Unitarian, had been burned at the stake in 1553. This action led him to call Geneva, "the Second Rome". While at the Spanish church, Reina had a major disagreement with Juan Perez de Pineda which led him to leave Geneva and to go to London. Because many of the Spanish Calvinists at the Geneva church left with him, Reina was called the "Spanish Moses" by Perez.

London had been selected because Queen Elizabeth I had ascended to the throne in 1557 and had made England a safe haven for European Protestants. Upon arrival in 1558, Reina and the Spanish Calvinists joined the French Calvinist Church on Threadneedle Street. But the Spaniards began to worship separately in a home in 1559. Reina then petitioned the Queen for permission to begin a Spanish congregation in 1560. The queen granted him a pension of 60 pounds a year and assigned them the use of St. Mary Axe Church, which had been used as a warehouse. At the same time, the Spanish ambassador in London, Bishop Alvaro de la Quadra, became aware of Reina's arrival in London and of the Queen's favor toward him. He corresponded with King Philip II of Spain and began to spy on him.

Reina published a confession of his beliefs known as *Confesión de Fe Christiana* (Confession of the Christian Faith) also in 1560. This confession caused the French Calvinists to mistrust him due to his view of infant baptism, communion and the Trinity. He believed that although infant baptism was not mentioned in the scriptures, it should not be prohibited⁴. His view on the communion was vague since he stated that it is ". . . in the memory of the Lord's death . . ."⁵, which could be viewed to be Calvinistic. He continued with ". . . the bread is the same and true body of the Lord who died for us and the wine is his own blood that was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. . ."⁶ which could be interpreted to be Lutheran. Reina's view of God was Trinitarian yet he was accused by the French

⁴ Casiodoro de Reina, *Confesión de Fe Christiana*, (London: 1560. Reprint with an introduction and notes by A. Gordon Kinder, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1988) 24,

⁵ *Ibid.*, 25, original in Spanish, translation by the writer.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Calvinists to be a believer in Servetism or Unitarianism. Reina's statements would remain controversial among Calvinists and Lutherans for more than 30 years.

In 1561, Reina married a young widow, Anna Leon. His marriage was not seen well by Queen Elizabeth I, who revoked his salary since she believed that the clergy should not marry. The Spanish ambassador, reported this also to King Philip II.

Difficulties continued with the French Consistory in London due to the confession and were exacerbated when in August, 1563, Reina was accused of sodomy, adultery, embezzlement and Servetism by a member of his church, Balthasar Sánchez. As the investigation started, Reina feared that these accusations would automatically lead to a death sentence for him and left London secretly for Antwerp in the Spanish Netherlands. His wife would later follow him disguised as a sailor. In spite of Reina's sudden and clandestine departure, his friends from San Isidoro, Cipriano de Valera and Francisco Farías, made the effort to speak in his favor before London's bishop Edmund Grindal. The 17-year-old young man, Jean de Bayonne Jr., who supposedly was molested by Reina, was sent to Brussels by his father who also had feared capital punishment for him. Jean declared during his testimony in Brussels in 1564, that he had no idea of the charges against Reina and supposed that they were made up out of hatred for Casiodoro. Another accuser, Angel Victor, later retracted his accusations of adultery and affirmed Reina's integrity and deep personal faith. Professor Kinder believed that the whole affair had been initiated by *agent provocateurs* from the Inquisition in order to discredit Reina's influence in England and to hinder any Bible translation into Spanish.⁷

The Spanish spies informed King Philip II of his departure from England. The spies were ordered by the King to arrest him and a bounty was established for his capture and return to Spain. A large quantity of money was spent to capture him but Reina eluded capture.⁸ Reina and Anna left Antwerp in January, 1564 and moved to Frankfurt where Anna's father lived. Reina left Frankfurt to

⁷ Kinder, 35

⁸ Boehmer Vol. 2, 172

meet with his friend from San Isidoro, Antonio del Corro in Orleans and then in Bergerac, France. Del Corro moved to Montargis to serve as Renée de France's, daughter of Louis XII, personal chaplain and took Reina and Juan Perez with him. During this time Reina had continued to work on his translation with the help of del Corro and Perez. Reina then returned to Frankfort in 1565. There he received a request to be the pastor of the French Calvinist Church in Strasbourg.

But at Strasbourg, Reina was opposed by the Calvinists in Geneva. The reasons were his London Confession and the unresolved accusations of immorality. The church in Strasbourg wrote to Geneva to defend and support Reina. After corresponding with the Genevan Calvinists, including Theodore Beza, Reina decided not to assume the pastorate but did remain there to continue with his Bible translation work. His wife Anna, left Frankfort and joined him in Strasbourg. There she supported the both of them by working as a seamstress. Perez and del Corro left Montargis and moved to Paris where Perez died in 1567 while working on a Spanish translation of the whole Bible. Perez provided a fund to be used after his death for the completion of the Bible translation.

Reina moved to Basel in 1567 to complete his translation and print his work. He contracted the printing services of Johan Herbst also known as Oporinus. They had agreed to print 1,100 copies with 900 for Reina and 200 for Oporinus. The printing began in February, 1568 when Reina had completed his translation of the Old Testament. He had planned on using Perez' translation of the New Testament for his Bible. Unfortunately Oporinus died in July, 1568 and had left a large number of debts. Reina could not recover the money he had paid him for the printing and was in need of funds to complete the work. Oporinus had sub-contracted the printing to Thomas Guarin, but Guarin in turn sub-contracted the project to Samuel Apiarius who ultimately carried out the work. Reina appealed to Perez' estate and to friends in Strasbourg for funding to complete the printing. The work resumed by May, 1569, and he received all the necessary funds by August, 1569. Reina still did not have a copy of Perez' New Testament by April, 1569, so he translated the New Testament himself. The Bible printing was

completed on August 6, 1569 and shipped secretly to Strasbourg in wine casks for distribution in Spain and Europe.

Reina's translation became to be known as the *Biblia del Oso*, because of its front cover⁹. Samuel Apiarius, used his emblem on the front cover that described the printer and his project. It is a bear reaching for honey from a hole in a tree. The surname, Apiarius, means beekeeper in Latin (Biener in German)¹⁰ and he was from Bern, the city of the bear. The emblem also conveyed the meaning that the word of God had been hidden but was now being discovered and that the words of the Bible were as sweet as honey for the reader discovering its contents.¹¹

From the Publication of *La Biblia del Oso* to his Death: 1570-1594

After completing the *Biblia del Oso*, Reina returned to Strasbourg and then moved to Frankfort with his family, where he worked as a silk trader and book dealer. Casiodoro and Anna's children, Augustino, Margarethe, Servus, and Johan were born between the years 1571 through 1577 in Frankfort. Reina's oldest son, Marcos, had been born in 1567 in Basel. In 1573, Reina published a commentary on the Gospel of John and on the 4th chapter of Matthew. Reina was called in 1578, to pastor the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (a French speaking Walloon Lutheran church) in Antwerp, Spanish Netherlands. He decided that it would be best to clear the accusations against him made in London before taking his new position and returned there in December, 1578 for the trial. The trial, led by Edmund Grindal, who was now the Archbishop of Canterbury, lasted until March, 1579. He was cleared by the trial but continued to be at odds with the French Consistory in London. The Consistory became displeased with his decision to pastor the Lutheran Walloon church.

Reina left for Antwerp and had his family join him from Frankfort in 1580. The Church of the Augsburg Confession grew rapidly and petitioned the city council for more space than what they had been originally assigned. Reina continued to suffer opposition from the French Calvinists in London

⁹ See Appendix A

¹⁰ Boehmer, Vol. 2, 236

¹¹ Jose A. Nieto, *El Renacimiento y la Otra España*, (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 1997) 524

who published his London Confession in French, Dutch and Latin and sent it to Antwerp in order to cast doubt on his now Lutheran views. Reina, however, was cleared of any doctrinal error by the Lutherans of Antwerp in 1581. But the government the Spanish Netherlands under the duke of Parma in 1585, called for the Protestants to leave Antwerp within four years. Reina decided to return to Frankfort and took most of his congregation with him.

The Walloon congregation tried to officially reestablish their church in Frankfort but was continually rejected by the City Council. The Council objected to Reina because they felt he was elderly and he didn't speak German well. While Reina and the congregation were waiting for official approval, Reina supported his family by returning to his silk and book trading enterprises. On May 31, 1585, the Netherlands Community of the Augsburg Confession, as the refugees from Antwerp were by then called, established a foundation for the care of poor Walloon Lutherans. The foundation and Reina helped keep the congregation together from 1585 to 1592. Finally in 1592, Antoine Serray a French pastor who spoke both French and German well was accepted by the Frankfurt City Council to be the senior pastor of the community. But Serray was sickly and the congregation again petitioned the city council for permission to have Reina lead them. Reina was under suspicion because of his past Calvinistic affiliation and was questioned by the Frankfort Consistory. After the questioning, Reina agreed to subscribe to all the ancient and Lutheran confessions. This satisfied the city council but approved Reina to be the associate pastor. He was officially installed on July 20, 1593 but died shortly thereafter on March 15, 1594.

Reina's Legacy: La Biblia del Oso

Reina suggested a plan for future Bible translations in the preface to *La Biblia de Oso*. He wrote that a committee ought to be established for the translation of the Bible and for review of future revisions. A central synod should be formed to supervise future printing and distribution.¹² This

¹²Casiodoro de Reina, *La Biblia del Oso*, Basel: Apiarius, 1569. Reprinted introduction and notes by Juan Guillén Torralba, 4 vols. (Madrid: Ediciones Alfaguara, 1987) Vol. 1, 23

method was similar to the one used in the translation and publication of the King James Version in 1611 and in later revisions of his own Bible in the 20th Century.¹³ In fact, the King James translators consulted with Reina's Bible as they prepared their work for publication.¹⁴

Cipriano de Valera revised Reina's New Testament in 1596. He revised the whole Bible in 1602 and published it in Amsterdam. He used only his name on the front cover although he does give credit to Reina in his preface.¹⁵ Valera removed the apocryphal portions that Reina had placed within the Old Testament¹⁶ and placed them as other Geneva Bibles did, in between the testaments.

No other Spanish translations were made until Father Scio translated the Bible from the Vulgate in 1793. Felix Torres Amat, made another translation from the Vulgate in 1825.¹⁷ Spain's most famous literary expert, Marcelino Menendez y Pelayo¹⁸ who was antagonistic towards Protestants wrote in 1880 that Reina's translation was superior to Scio's or Torres Amat.¹⁹

The Spanish Bible Today

In 1862 the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) published an edition of the Valera's 1602 version but Reina did not receive printed credit for his work until the BFBS and the American Bible Society (ABS) published a revision in 1909. This revision and subsequent ones are known as the "Reina-Valera" Bible. In 1960, the ABS and BFBS updated the 1909 revision.²⁰ The 1960 revision became the most extensively used Spanish Bible version. The United Bible Societies published its most recent revision of the Reina-Valera Bible in 1995. Other Spanish translations have been published such as the *Versión Popular* (1979), *La Biblia de las Américas* (1986) and the *Nueva*

¹³ Eugene A. Nida, "Reina-Valera Spanish Revision of 1960," *The Bible Translator* 12, no.3 (1961): 112-119

¹⁴ Erroll F. Rhodes and Liana Lupas, *The Translators to the Reader: The Original Preface of the King James Version of 1611 Revisited*, (New York: American Bible Society, 1997) 3, 57

¹⁵ Boehmer, Vol. 3, 154

¹⁶ Reina, Vol. 1, Index

¹⁷ Sociedad Bíblica de México, "¿Cuántas versiones o traducciones al español hay?"

<http://www.socbiblicademexico.com.mx/Pag_Biblia_Esp/Versiones_BibEsp.html>, accessed April 3, 2003

¹⁸ Francisco Ugarte, *España y su Civilización*, (New York: The Odessey Press, 1952) 147

¹⁹ Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de los Heterodoxes Españoles*, (Madrid: Librería Católica de San José, 1880) Vol. 2, 471

²⁰ Nida, "Reina-Valera", 107

Versión Internacional (1998)²¹. Although the versions of the late 20th century are easier to read for Latin Americans, the Reina-Valera 1960 revision remains the most preferred Bible by both Spanish and Latin-American evangelicals.

Reina's Other Legacies

Reina's oldest son Marcos, educated at the University of Wittenberg, became the pastor of the Walloon church of Frankfort in 1596 and served there as a bilingual German and French minister for 29 years. The Netherlander Community Foundation²² started by Reina appears to have lasted up until 1985²³.

Cipriano de Valera wrote in 1588: "If the San Isidoro Monastery one day becomes a university where theology is primarily taught, it will be because God had been merciful on Seville. God has done greater and bigger things than this in our time."²⁴ Valera's dream became a reality in 1981, when the Reina-Valera Foundation, established by Spanish evangelicals, purchased²⁵ a part of the San Isidoro del Campo Monastery from the Union Brewery which had been occupying it. The main building was used for Bible conferences and Evangelical worship services. The regional government of Andalucía purchased the monastery from the Foundation in 1988 and renovated it. It was opened in 2002 for an exhibition entitled: "San Isidoro del Campo (1301-2002), Spiritual Fortress, Sanctuary of Power".²⁶

Conclusion

Casiodoro de Reina's translation work continues to affect millions of Spanish-speakers into the 21st century. He is considered to be the patriarch of the Spanish reformers.²⁷

²¹ Sociedad Bíblica de México, "Cuantas versiones hay"

²² Boehmer, Vol. 2, 310

²³ Institut fuer Stadgeschichte: Bestaende "Altes Archiv" "1.12.21.3 Niederländische Gemeinde Augsburgischer Confession", <http://www.stadtgeschichteffm.de/abteilungen/abteilung_1/112inhalt.htm>, accessed April 19, 2003

²⁴ Cipriano de Valera, *Los dos tratados: del Papa i de la Missa*, (London: Arnold Hatfeild, 1588) quoted in Gabino Fernandez Campos, *Reforma y Contrarreforma en Andalucía*, (Seville: Editoriales Anulzas Unidas, S.A., 1986), 50, original in Spanish, this is the writer's own translation.

²⁵ "A Spanish Monk Gets His Wish," *Christianity Today*, November 6, 1981, 78

²⁶ Centro de Estudios de la Reforma, "Episodio Protestante de la Historia del Monasterio de San Isidoro del Campo", <<http://www.protestantes.net/museo/informacion.htm>>, accessed April 2, 2003

²⁷ Raymond S. Rosales, *Casiodoro de Reina: Patriarca del Protestantismo Hispano*, ed. Ruben Dominguez, St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Publications Monograph Series – Number 5, 2002, 167

Hispanics are now the USA's largest minority²⁸ and Spanish is 2nd most commonly spoken language in the USA.²⁹ As pastors, church leaders and workers increasingly encounter Hispanics in their ministries, they will need to become familiar with Hispanic religious culture and history. It is important that leaders and workers know that Evangelicalism is an integral part of Hispanic history, that it blossomed during Spain's golden age and that it is not a recent addition to Hispanic religious life.

The lives of 16th century Spaniards such as Reina, Valera, del Corro, Perez, and many others demonstrate that Hispanics wanted to develop a personal relationship with God, study the scriptures and did not settle for an external, formal and ritualistic faith. Their faith led them to have a passion to translate the scriptures into Spanish so that many of their fellow countrymen would come to faith in Christ.

Reina's difficult life is an example for 21st century believers to remain passionate in the proclamation of the Word of God and to be steadfast in the faith in the face of prolonged opposition.

²⁸ Genaro C. Armas, "Hispanics are now largest minority group," The Detroit News, Wednesday, January 22, 2003, <<http://www.detroitnews.com/2003/census/0304/26/a04-66252.htm>>, accessed April 26, 2003

²⁹ US Census Bureau, "Table 5. Detailed List of Languages Spoken at Home for the Population 5 years and Over by State: 2000," <<http://www.census.gov/population/cen2000/phc-t20/tabOS.xls>>, accessed April 26, 2003

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Appendix A:
Cover of La Biblia del Oso, August, 1569



The Bible
which is the Sacred Books of the Old and New Testaments
Translated into Spanish
The Word of our God lasts forever. Isaiah 40,
1569

Appendix B
Portrait of Casiodoro de Reina, located in Frankfort, Germany³⁰



Translation of Inscription around the Portrait³¹

Cassiodoro de Reina, born in Seville, citizen of Frankfurt am Main, and French Lutheran preacher, first at Antwerp and afterwards at Frankfort, died there in the year 1594, on March 15th.

Translation of Inscription under the Portrait²

Spainard by birth, a good Protestant, a faithful preacher, a man of great talents, well known at Antwerp and here at Frankfort, such was this Reina. What more do you want? His name is highly respected among Netherlanders, as it is well deserved from their church

Appendix C

³⁰Jorge A. González, *Casiodoro de Reina: Traductor de la Biblia en Español*, (Mexico City: Sociedad Biblica de Mexico, 1969) 5

³¹ Edward Boehmer, *Bibliotheca Wiffeniana – Spanish Reformers of Two Centuries*, 3 Vols, (London/Strasbourg, 1874-1904, reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, 196x) Vol.2, 318

Map of Cities Where Casiodoro de Reina Lived and Visited

