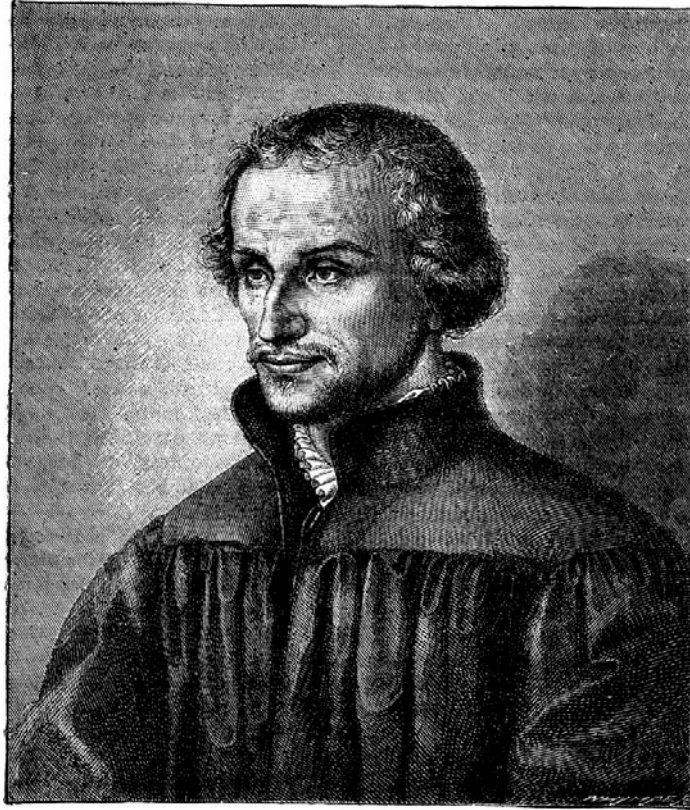


## *Philip Melanchthon*



From the portrait by Lucas Cranach

In the closing years of the fifteenth century I there lived in the small town of Bretten in the Palatinate, a skilful armourer, George Schwarzerd. The excellence of his work and the worthiness of his character, had made him known far and wide, and brought him orders not only from the Palatinate princes, but from those of Bavaria and Saxony. He was a man of probity, and also of piety, as many of the laity were, according to the light they had, before the Reformation. The armourer's wife, daughter of one of the magistrates of the town, was also devout in her way, and was remarkable for her shrewdness and prudence. To her is ascribed the authorship of some old-fashioned metrical sayings, still current among the German people, such as these:

No money's lost in giving alms,  
Nor time, at church, in prayers and psalms.  
Ill-gotten wealth but loss secures;  
God's Word to error never lures.

This worthy pair had a son, born on the 14th of February, 1497, who was named Philip Schwarzerd; in after life, and in history, better known by the Greek paraphrase of Schwarz-Erd (black earth) Philip Melanchthon. Who gave him this name, and when, we shall presently hear.

Philip was not eleven years old when his father died. Two days before he breathed his last, George the armourer called his son to his bedside, and exhorted him to have the thought of God always present to his mind. "I foresee," he said, "that there are troublous times coming upon the

world. I have witnessed great changes,

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but greater are now preparing. May God guide and guard you!" Then the boy was sent to the house of a friend, at Spires, that he might not be distressed by the sight of his father's death.

The boy's maternal grandfather named Reuter, gladly took charge of Philip, and also of his little brother George; and, having a son of his own, the good magistrate, who had already procured a learned and pious tutor for the education of the Schwarzerd boys, sent the three youths to a school at Pforzheim. Here they stayed in the house of Dame Reuter, a kinswoman of the boys. They went to school at the Pforzheim gymnasium, a middle class school, of which the headmaster was George Simler, a good scholar, who knew Greek and Hebrew, as well as Latin. These rare qualifications in a teacher at that time could be of little use in the ordinary routine of the school, but Simler delighted to teach a special class of pupils who wished to study the "new learning," and Philip Schwarzerd was one of the most eager and diligent learners.

While thus pursuing his studies, a stranger from Wurtemberg came occasionally to visit his sister, the widow Reuter. This visitor was no other than the famous Dr. Reuchlin, whose name was known throughout Germany as the most learned man of the time, and one who had done even more than Erasmus for promoting the study of Hebrew and Greek.

The career of John Reuchlin had been a remarkable one. When a boy he sang in the choir of the church of Pforzheim. Everyone was struck with the beauty of his voice, and it attracted the notice of the Margrave of Baden. On making inquiry, the Margrave learned that the boy was son of an honest burgess of the town, and he took him into his favour, and made him companion to his own son. In 1473 when the Margrave sent his son Frederick to continue his studies at the University of Paris, he selected John Reuchlin to accompany him. In Paris, Reuchlin had the advantage of being under the ablest teachers whilst studying Greek and Hebrew; for neither of which was there any professor then in all Germany. The poor German-lad was soon able to help other students in their classical exercises, and thus procured the means of purchasing books, and advancing his own studies. When he left Paris he was little over twenty years of age. He went to Basle, and there he taught philosophy and languages. It was thought a prodigy that a German should speak and teach Greek. From Basle, he was sent for by Eberhard, of Wurtemberg, to come to Tubingen, to introduce the new learning into that recently-established university. In 1487, Eberhard took the young scholar with him to Italy, and having obtained an audience at the Papal Court, Reuchlin delivered before the Pope and the cardinals a discourse of such pure and elegant Latin that all were amazed. On hearing such a speech from "a barbarous German," the Pope said that "the young man deserved to be placed among the best orators of France and Italy."

In the succeeding years, after residing at Heidelberg and at Worms, Reuchlin was again in Rome, where he studied Hebrew under a learned Israelite, and Greek, under a scholar famous at that time, Argyropylos. On his return to Germany he taught Greek at Wurtemberg, and he was the first in Germany to publish a Hebrew grammar and dictionary.

This was the learned scholar, who on a visit to his sister at Pforzheim, saw the young student Schwarzerd, and predicted for him a renown in literature and in theology. It was he who gave him the more classical name of Melanchthon. Reuchlin himself had many troubles and

controversies afterwards, but he felt certain that the cause of the new learning would be advanced by his young kinsman.

After leaving Pforzheim, Philip Melanchthon spent some time in Heidelberg, where he took his Bachelor's degree in 1511, but being refused the degree of Master of Arts on account of his youth, he entered the University of Tubingen in 1512. His old teacher at Pforzheim, George Simler, was now one of the Tubingen professors. Reuchlin was then living at Stuttgart, a few miles only from Tubingen, and in his house, where he often was a welcome guest, he met and became intimate with Francis von Sickingen, and Ulrich von Hutten, two of the noble laymen who in after years became zealous and powerful supporters of Luther and of the Reformation. In 1514 Philip took his M.A. degree. His fame had by this time spread far and wide, and Erasmus in one of his letters said: "What promise there is in this young man—this boy!" He spoke of his marvellous attainments, his purity of style, and the wide extent of his reading. With such a reputation it is not surprising that he was on the way to eminence.

In the spring of 1518 a letter came to Reuchlin from the Duke Frederick of Saxony, asking him if he knew a fit person for the chair of Greek in the University of Wittenberg, in the prosperity of which he was then deeply interested. The reply was that he knew the very man for the post, a young relative of his own, Philip Melanchthon, now at Tubingen. The arrangement was soon made for entering on his new duties as professor of Greek, at Wittenberg, where Luther was already famous. He had been appointed professor of philosophy in 1508, but had soon left the barren field of philosophy, "falsely so called," for the study and the exposition of the sacred Scriptures, or Biblical theology. He had zealously applied himself to the study of the original languages of Holy Writ, and had given lectures on the Psalms, and on several parts of the New Testament. Luther's visit to Rome, his ordination, his commencing to preach, and other important steps in his life had been taken before the arrival of the new professor of Greek, which no one hailed with greater delight than Luther.

On the 25th of August,- 1518, Melanchthon arrived in Wittenberg, and on the 29th the hall of the University was crowded to hear the first address of the new professor. Few of the audience had yet seen him, and when there appeared before them a short, slim stripling, even boy-like in his aspect, and with manner quiet and almost shy, a feeling of surprise and disappoint

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ment seemed to come over the assembly. Is this the learned scholar who is to add lustre to the University? Even those who knew most about his attainments listened with anxiety to his inaugural discourse.

The lecture was in Latin, as were all academic addresses in those times. The classic grace, the lucid style, the eloquent feeling of the speaker at once riveted attention. He told the story of the decline of ancient learning, and described the causes of the long darkness in the world of letters. He spoke of the dawn already begun of a brighter day, and foretold a better time coming, when the dry and dead compilations of dark ages would be abandoned, and the voices again be heard of Homer, and Plato, and Cicero, and Virgil, in their own classic tongues. In the enthusiasm for the revival of learning, the whole assembly felt sympathy. But, when the professor went on to say that not only classical learning must be restored, but sacred literature, and the religion of the Bible be recovered, the heart of Luther was glad, and the earnest and pious men in the audience

were delighted. "When the Bible is known, the Divine Majesty will be understood. Above all, the revelation of Christ is the sum and centre of sacred learning." "The odour of the sweet spices of the Master is sweeter than all the fragrance of human learning. When the Spirit guides us, and the mind is enriched with the true culture, we may enter into the courts of Divine wisdom. And when the soul is brought to the original source of truth, we hope to taste the sweetness of Christ; his law becomes full of light, and we are charmed with the taste of the wisdom of Heaven."

The lecturer closed amidst universal applause. The joy of Luther was intense, and to the young professor his heart was united in sympathy and affection.

In all history there is no instance of friendship more true, and more tender, than that of Luther and Melanchthon. The difference in their age, their temperament, their whole outward condition made more remarkable the knitting together of their hearts and souls. In personal appearance, the contrast was great. The people of Wittenberg watched the pair almost with amusement as they walked together; Luther, by head and shoulders taller, and in build strong and broad, as when the Emperor Maximilian said of him, he wished he was one of his soldier-captains, instead of a monk; while little Philip at his side was slim in figure, and delicate in look, and still retaining the boy-like appearance of earlier years. Luther had a fatherly feeling toward the younger friend, to whom he yet looked with admiration on account of his genius and learning, his grace and gentleness. United in natural affection, the hearts of these two men were joined by deeper and stronger ties. "I love Luther's studies," said Philip. "I love the sacred science he pursues; and the man himself, I love above all that is on earth, and with all my heart." What Luther thought of his young friend may be seen in what he wrote, when he was on his way to appear before the new Emperor Charles V. at Worms. Philip would have accompanied him, but Luther would not allow him. "If I never return, and my enemies should take my life, cease not, dear brother, to teach, and stand fast in the truth. Labour in my stead, since I can no longer work. If thy life be spared, my death will matter little."

When he was in the Wartburg, whither the Elector of Saxony had carried him for safety, Luther's thoughts went back to Wittenberg. Dreading the charge of having deserted the field of conflict, and longing to be again in action, he wrote to Philip: "If I perish, the gospel will lose nothing. You will succeed me, as Elisha succeeded Elijah, with a double portion of my spirit." And then, calling to mind the timidity of his friend, he added: "Minister of the word! keep the walls and towers of Jerusalem; hold the fort. After me, they will strike your tower. But the truth of God will yet prevail."

The Diet of Worms was in 1521. In 1526 the first Diet of Spires was held, over which Ferdinand, the brother of Charles V. presided. The Elector, John of Saxony, who had succeeded his brother, Luther's patron; the Landgrave of Hesse; and other German princes showed so bold a front that Ferdinand did not venture to carry out the emperor's orders to put down the Lutheran adherents. The emperor was even induced to direct that toleration should be granted to the professors of the evangelical or Reformed faith. To this he was led, not from any sympathy with their cause, but in order to vex the Pope, with whom he was then on bad terms. Three years later, a second Diet was held at Spires, where a decree was issued depriving the reforming party of the privileges obtained at the former Diet; and it was against this revocation that the famous "protest" was made, which has gained for the adherents of the Reformation the historical name of Protestants.

Luther was not present at either of these Diets, nor at that of Augsburg held in 1530. Being not

only excommunicated by the Pope, but under the ban of the emperor, he thought it prudent, less for his personal safety than from desire not to exasperate the enemies of the faith, not to take any part in public affairs. He was all the more free to advance by his writings the cause of evangelical truth, and these years were his busiest in issuing the works which established the evangelical truth throughout Germany and in other lands. It was Melanchthon who took the lead at Augsburg, and the celebrated Confession of Augsburg was mainly his work. It was the first time that a full and clear statement of the new doctrines was prepared, to which both friends and foes could refer as official and authoritative.

Although Luther was not at the Diet, he was not far off, remaining in the Castle of Coburg, at hand to give his counsel, and earnest in prayer for the prosperity of the good cause. Thus he wrote to Melanchthon during the proceedings at the Diet: "I am in truth faithfully by your side. The cause concerns me also, indeed more than any of you; and the work has not been begun lightly, for the sake of honour or worldly good. In this, the Holy Ghost is my witness, and the cause itself has shown it until now." When the

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Confession was completed, the ceremony of presentation took place in the presence of the Emperor, the Elector of Saxony, John the Constant, the Margrave George of Brandenburg, and Philip of Hesse. Luther wrote from Coburg: "Great is my joy to have lived to this hour, when Christ is proclaimed by such confessors, before such an assembly, through so glorious a Confession. Now is Thy word fulfilled, 'I will speak of Thy testimony before kings.' The other word will also be fulfilled: 'Thou hast not let me be put to shame,' for 'Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is in heaven.' "

After the return from Augsburg, there were years of more quiet but not less useful labour at Wittenberg. The revising of the German Bible was accomplished, Melanchthon taking the chief part in the New Testament. The training of evangelical preachers was the anxious care of the professors, students flocking to the University from various lands, as well as from all parts of Germany. Both the friends were diligent in writing books for publication, by which the knowledge of the Reformed religion was spread everywhere. Of Melanchthon's part in this good work we can judge from what Luther said: "The student of theology has now far greater advantages than students ever had before. First, he has his Bible, which is translated into German so clearly and distinctly that any one may readily understand it. Next, he has Melanchthon's Common Place Book (*Loci communes*), which he should read over and over again, until he has it by heart. Once master of these volumes, he may be regarded as a theologian, whom neither devil nor heretic can overcome; for he has all divinity at his finger-ends, and may read intelligently whatever else he pleases. Afterwards, he may study Melanchthon's Commentary on the Romans, and mine on the Galatians; and also practice elocution. We possess no work wherein the whole body of theology, wherein religion is more completely summed up, than in Melanchthon's Common Place Book. All the fathers, all the compilers of sentences put together, are not comparable with this book. It is—after the Scriptures—the most perfect of works. Melanchthon is a better logician than myself, he argues better. My superiority lies rather in the rhetorical way."

We can all understand how a scholar so learned, and a theologian so profound, attracted many students at the class-rooms at Wittenberg. The home-life of the Professor was as delightful as his lectures were popular. He had married as long ago as 1520, and when the house was set up at

Wittenberg, his hospitality, like that of Luther, was unbounded, and almost beyond his means. There were always students and visitors. Once, in a letter to a friend, he wrote: "Yesterday there were twelve languages spoken at table!" He had losses and sorrows in his family, but the influence of the home-life of the Wittenberg professors was a notable advantage to the evangelical students, and helped the reception of the new religion, which was more in harmony with Christian teaching than the celibate and cloistered schools of other places and of former times.

One other incident we are tempted to recall, as showing the love borne by Luther to his friend. When at Weimar, on a journey, Melanchthon was seized with sudden illness, which increased and threatened to prove fatal. At the call of the Elector, Luther and Kreuziger hastened to Weimar. The sick man was all but unconscious, but Luther poured forth his soul in supplication, the fervour of which has been described by one who heard the prayer. He pleaded mightily with God, and said that the Lord must grant his prayer, if henceforth he was to put faith in the Scripture promises. When his prayer was ended, he took the hand of the sick man, saying: "Be of good cheer, Philip; God hears the prayer of faith; thou shalt not die. Do not give way to desponding, but trust in the Lord who can kill and bring to life, who can smite and heal again. No, no, Philip, thou must still further serve the Lord in the land of the living." He did recover, "recalled from death unto life, by Divine power" as he himself afterwards said.

Luther himself did not live many years after this. He, like Melanchthon, had passed a life of constant labour, and trial, and conflict, though with many mercies and blessings which they acknowledged together in songs of joyful thankfulness. "Come, Philip, and let us sing together the forty-sixth Psalm," was the tone of many of the musical evenings at the cheerful homes of the two professors.

After Luther's death, in 1546, Melanchthon never was the same man. In his personal piety he ripened for glory, and his zeal in the cause of religion and learning did not flag; but in public life he was less decided and resolute than in the times when he stood beside the strong champion of the Reformation. He is charged with too great readiness to accept compromises, and to lower the standard of truth, but he himself declared that he yielded no essential point, but sought toleration in less important matters, for the sake of concord and peace. On these questions it is not necessary to enter, for we are not giving a complete sketch of the life or the work of Melanchthon.<sup>1</sup> As Luther is regarded as the great Reformer, so his friend has been called the Preceptor of Germany. He continued his work as teacher and professor till his end, in 1560. He caught cold in returning from Leipzig where he had gone to attend some theological examinations. After a few days' illness he died on the 19th of April of that year, and on the 24th he was borne, amidst universal sorrow, to the same church where the coffin of Luther had been laid fourteen years before.

It is fortunate that a painter lived in those days who has left the most life-like portraits both of Luther and Melanchthon. Our portrait of Philip is that by Lucas Cranach, who had long been the personal friend of the Wittenberg professors, and himself an adherent of the Reformed faith. He was one of the two witnesses who signed the legal deed at the marriage of

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<sup>1</sup> A brief but admirable memoir of Melanchthon, is that by the Rev. George Wilson, M.A., one of the new biographical series of tracts published by the Religious Tract Society.

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Luther and his Catherine in 1525. Of his many great works none have perpetuated his renown more than the portraits of Luther and of Melanchthon. They were both painted in 1532, two years after Melanchthon had drawn up the famous Augsburg Confession, and when Luther was beholding the triumph of his cause, assured by the Peace of Nuremberg. The attitude is that in which the Reformer stood before the Emperor at Worms, Melanchthon wears his professional gown as at Wittenberg. Cranach born in 1472, accompanied Frederick the Wise on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and afterwards had apartments in the Palace of the Elector. He was repeatedly Mayor of the town of Wittenberg. He died at Weimar in 1553, at the age of eighty. To his honour, he shared the Elector Frederick's captivity at Innspruck, when taken prisoner by Charles V. at Mülberg in 1547, rather than accompany the Emperor to the Netherlands as court painter. In his time he was second in talent and renown only to Albert Durer.

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