Compass Life Adult Sunday School

Jay Wertin - June 23, 2019

**“The European Pulpit: Theodore Beza”**

**I. Early Life, University & Marriage (1519-1548)**

Theodore Beza was born on June 24, 1519 in Vezelay, France, an ancient city with a long history, but by the 16th century the city was well past its prime. His father was the governor of Vezelay and many members of his family were involved in government and the church. The noble family was well off and Beza lacked for nothing as he grew up, however he did suffer from poor health and physical ailments in his early life. Beza was possessed with a bright mind and a winning character, so much so that his uncle, a member of the Paris Parliament, begged his parents to let him take young Theodore with him back to Paris for his education at the University. His mother, not thrilled with the idea, accompanied him to Paris, but unfortunately died soon after her return home. In 1528 he was sent to Orleans to study under Melchior Wolmar, a German \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Two years after that, in 1530, he followed Wolmar to Bourges, the focal point of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Beza became fluent in Latin and Greek, studied the Classics and enjoyed writing. Wolmar had to leave France in 1534 and Beza was urged by his father to return to Orleans and study law, which he did in 1535. Beza’s talent and brilliance shined in the company of honorable and scholarly men by the time he earned his law degree in 1539, but law was a drudgery to him as he returned to Paris. His goal was to be a man of leisure and write poetry. His family had secured for him two benefices (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) that gave him 700 gold crowns annually. He was able to pursue his own studies and writings (*Juvenilia*) and was secretly married in 1544 to Claudine Denoese. While Beza was being pulled between Law and the Church, he resisted both until 1548.

**II. Illness, Conversion & Lausanne University (1548-1558)**

In the latter part of 1548, Beza fell so ill that it was presumed he would die. He spent months in agony and with plenty of time to consider his eternity. It was during this illness that he recognized his need for a savior and gave his life to Christ. Having been influenced by Wolmar’s Protestantism and the serious issues he saw in the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), Beza made plans to travel to Switzerland where he could give free voice to his conversion and Protestant mind. He secretly traveled to Geneva with his wife arriving in October of 1548. There he could finally acknowledged his marriage, but his means of support was cut off with his renunciation of Roman Catholicism and the anger of his family. In Geneva, Beza was welcomed by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Ten years his senior, Calvin was also a student of Wolmar and most likely overlapped studies at the school with Beza. After a few months in Geneva, Beza traveled to Tubingen to visit his old teacher and having passed through Lausanne was entreated by Pierre Viret and Calvin to accept a position at the University teaching Greek. In addition to writing a well-received play called Abraham’s Sacrifice, Beza wrote a defense of the burning of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by the civil magistrates and a doctrine of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Beza also engaged in politics involving himself in the defense of 5 of his students who were imprisoned in RCC friendly France and renegotiating the alliance between Geneva and the powerful Canton of Bern. Similarly, in 1557, it was Beza, along with Farel, who were chosen to rouse the Protestant cantons and princes of southern Germany to protect the Waldensians from persecution by France three separate times. As part of his mission to entreat the Protestants to send envoys to the French court, Beza wanted to unite Protestants on the Lord’s Supper. He wrote a brief confession of faith that reduced to a minimum the differences of opinion between Lutherans and Calvinists. However, instead of uniting the Protestants it brought animosity from Lutherans, Calvinists and Zwinglians all on Beza.

**III. Geneva & France (1558-1564)**

After a 9-year period in Lausanne, Beza moved to Geneva to teach in Calvin’s newly begun University of Geneva. Through his magnetic personality, amazing intellect and godly faithfulness, Lausanne grew from a handful of students to over 700 by the time he left. But the call of Calvin and the political struggle between Bern and Lausanne, made it clear that his time there was at an end. Beza became the Professor of Greek Literature and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the university at its opening on June 5, 1559. He and Calvin traded off teaching simple interpretation of books of the Bible, exegesis and theology. But the following year, Beza was called to Nérac in France to advise the King and Queen of Navarre in the Word of God and the issue of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (French Reformed Protestants) who were growing in number and becoming more bold. Beza’s visit was influential in converting the Queen of Navarre and her son, the future Henry IV of France, to Protestantism. However, this was the beginning of the French Wars of Religion, which persisted until 1598 when the Edict of Nantes was issued. Beza was requested back to France in 1561 to attend the Colloquy of Poissy to defend the theology of the Reformation. Beza was reluctant given the persecution of Protestants, but was finally persuaded and safe passage was granted. On September 9, 1561, Beza delivered the Protestant defense of faith on salvation, the sacraments and church governance to members of the French monarchy and a group of Cardinals from the RCC using Scripture to back up his claims. The Cardinals refused to answer verbally on the spot and presented a written response a few days later that lacked \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ backing, was condescending and resorted to church authority for its defense. Beza remained in France to aid the Huguenot’s in their struggle to religious freedom. He served as voice of reason to the growing Protestant movement and their increasing unrest. Beza served the Protestants for the next 2 years as the religious war broke out. His momentous preaching, theological intellect and masterful statesmanship were strategic at the outset of this persecution. He returned to Geneva in May of 1563 and resumed his role in Calvin’s Geneva University, but the duties necessarily increased due to Calvin’s failing health and death one year later in May of 1564.

**IV. Calvin’s Successor (1565-1588)**

After Calvin’s death, it was a foregone conclusion that Beza would take over as his successor at the university and moderator of the Company of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as well as regularly preaching in the St. Pierre Church. One of his first tasks was to publish Calvin’s last work, a commentary on Joshua, to which he prefixed a short biography of Calvin that he had written. He produced a Greek New Testament which included the Latin Vulgate and his own Latin translation and *Annotations*. Eleven editions of this translation were produced over his lifetime with the 2nd edition being used in the production of the 1611 KJV. He did most of his writing on the doctrine of divine sovereignty and election and the Lord’s Supper. He regularly wrote against the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ view of the Lord’s Supper as he saw the divide widening between the Lutherans and the other Reformers. He was a prolific writer who penned many letters, books, treatises, hymns and poems. His *Confession of the Christian Faith*, written for his father, along with many of his other works were included on the *Index of Prohibited Books* by the RCC. His love for his native France, showed itself most in his completion of the French Psalter and his hymns and verses inspired by the Psalms. The Battle Cry of the Huguenots was written by Beza based on Psalm 68.

Beza kept informed about how the Reformation was faring throughout Europe and Great Britain by corresponding with their leaders. He wrote back and forth with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who had fled Great Britain to Geneva when the Catholic Mary Tudor (1553-1558) began to reign. Many of his letters were in response to those seeking counsel in their respective struggles, especially in France. As the persecution became more intense in his home country, he took in many French RCC priests who had converted to Protestantism and were fleeing the country especially after the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre on August 24, 1572. After each flare up of persecution all eyes looked to Beza for advice and direction.

**V. Later Years (1588-1605)**

In his later years, he was still very active in the Protestant Reformation but his health was declining. In 1588 his wife of 42 years of marriage died from one of the many outbreaks of plague in the city. He was urged by his friends to remarry. So at the age of 70 he married Genevieve del Piano who was 50 years old. In 1588 he gave a careful and final revision to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ version of the Bible and gave further revision to the original 1560 version of the Bible of the Pastors and Professors of Geneva; the Geneva Bible. Beza wrote the preface to this version and was excited to send it to Henry IV of France. Henry sent the Bible back and soon after succeeded to the throne of France in 1589 initially as a Protestant. But in order to secure his kingdom he had to renounce his faith and return to the RCC. This was a huge blow to Beza who had known Henry since he was a little boy at court. In his infirmity, he was visited by colleagues and students who would read to him and seek his wisdom. His final thoughts were for the safety of his adopted city of Geneva as he passed on October 12, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**6/30 “Jehan Cauvin”**