

The Age of Reformers

The Reformers

1. Martin Luther

- a. The protestant spirit really came to life in Germany, with the teachings of Martin Luther, known as the “Hero of the Reformation.”
- b. Born of poor parents, he had early on decided to study law, yet after reading a copy of the Bible, he entered a monastery at 21.
- c. The start of it all: The selling of indulgences
 - i. The Catholic Church was eager for funds to complete St. Peter’s Cathedral, therefore they began the selling of indulgences
 1. John Tetzel, a super-salesman for the pope, reportedly stated, “As soon as your coin clinks in the chest, the souls of your friends will rise out of purgatory to heaven.”
- d. Luther takes a stand
 - i. On October 31, 1517, he posted on the door of the Wittenberg church building 95 propositions of disagreement, nearly all relating to the sell of indulgences, but in their application attacking the authority of the pope and priesthood.
 - ii. On June 15, 1520, Leo X issued an order demanding Luther to change his course. Luther burned the order and renounced his associations with the Catholic Church.
 1. In 1521, he was excommunicated from the church & burned the decree from the pope at the city gates of Wittenberg in front of an assembly of university professors, students and citizens of the city.
 2. Later that year, at the Diet of Worms (Worms was a city on the Rhine river), he was called to retract his statements regarding the church and pope; to which he replied, “Unless I am persuaded by means of the passages which I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the word of God—I cannot and will not retract... Here I stand. I can do naught otherwise. God help me. Amen.”
 - a. The emperor, Charles V, who presided over the council, allowed Luther to leave in peace.
 - iii. However, Luther was tempted in the same way many new and powerful leaders are tempted: in areas of compromise. He moved cautiously in the reform of worship and organization of the church and was given over to the desires of the princes who supported and protected him. Later, other actions and teachings of Luther proved

a wedge between he and those who followed him in the desire for religious reform:

1. Luther refused to renounce certain Catholic practices that were “not forbidden by Scripture”
 2. The peasants revolted and in standing with the royalist, he distanced himself from the common.
 3. The consenting of the marriage of Philip of Hesse, one of his supporters, before formally divorcing his pervious wife, in essence bigamy. He urged Philip to keep the second marriage secret.
2. Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) (Switzerland)
- a. Again, what motivated Zwingli’s efforts at reforming the church was the sale of indulgences.
 - b. He was a contemporary of Luther
 - c. He met with Luther once, and they agreed on 14 out of 15 propositions, but disagreed on the one regarding the Lord’s Supper
 - i. Luther viewed the Supper as actually having the presence of Christ about it, while Zwingli saw it only as a memorial.
 - d. Thanks to his efforts, fees for religious services (such as baptisms, burials, etc.) were eliminated; Monks and nuns were allowed to marry and image worship and relics were banned.
 - e. His primary beliefs were:
 - i. The absolute authority of the Bible
 - ii. Unconditional predestination
 - iii. The Lord’s Supper as a commemoration.
 - iv. He viewed original sin as a disease, not as shared guilt.
2. John Calvin (Switzerland)
- a. The most influential of the reformers regarding the development of doctrine
 - b. He was fascinated with Luther and the call for reform.
 - c. The center of his religious doctrines was the concept of the sovereignty of God
 - d. The concept of TULIP best sums up his doctrinal beliefs:
 - i. Total Depravity
 1. With the fall of man in Gen. 3, man sinned, man’s nature changed from the pure and perfect one created by God to a sinful one. There was then nothing good about man. This sinful nature is passed down to every one (inherited)
 2. From the Westminster Confession of Faith, “*By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin ad wholly defiled in all the facilities and parts of soul and body. They being the root of mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.*”

3. Proof text: Rom. 5:12; Ex. 20:5
4. What does the Bible say?
 - a. Ezekiel 18:19-20; Mt. 18:1-5; 1 Jn. 3:4
- ii. Unconditional Election
 1. Because man is totally evil and depraved, he can do nothing at all to be saved (man who is thrown a rope does not have the sense to grab the rope). Therefore, our salvation is based solely upon what God does-- man cannot do anything.
 2. And, since the Bible clearly teaches some will be lost, it can't be because man failed to do anything, it must be because God chose not to save them.
 3. From the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church, USA, "*By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.*"
 4. What does the Bible say?
 - a. Rev. 22:17; Heb. 2:9; Rom. 5:18; Lk. 13:5 (repent); Acts 2:37-28; Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 9:27 (Heb. 2:9; 1 Jn. 2:1-2; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9
- iii. Limited Atonement
 1. There are only a limited number of people Christ died for—only those who have been predestined.
 2. What does the Bible say?
 - a. John 3:16; Romans 5:18; 11:32; 1 Tim. 2:4
- iv. Irresistible Grace
 1. If salvation is solely the work of God, and certain are going to be saved regardless, than God must do something to prepare us. The unregenerate sinner, destined to be saved, cannot voluntarily obey God. But, when God has predestined that person, there is nothing they can do to stop it. When God saves you, you can do nothing to resist.
Holy Spirit conviction
 2. What does the Bible say?
 - a. Acts 24:25; Demas, 2 Tim. 4:10
- v. Perseverance of the Saints
 1. If God has fixed those who have been saved through predestination; if he has sealed them What does the Bible Say?
 - a. Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-29; Jn. 15:5-6; Gal. 5:4; Rom. 11:22; 2 Pet. 2:20-21; 2 Pet. 1:9
3. James Arminius
 - a. From the Neatherlands, he was the chief opponent of Calvin's teachings.
 - b. He attempted to modify Calvin's teachings so that man would not appear as an automaton in the hands of God

- c. Theologically, Calvinism became predominant, and the followers of Arminius were persecuted.
- d. Later, John Wesley and the Methodist adopted many of Arminius' teachings.

The Rise of Denominationalism

1. At the beginning of the 16th century, only the Roman Catholic Church existed, but by the end of the 16th century, almost every European nation had established its own national church.
2. When Luther officially broke from the Catholic Church and was excommunicated, and then in turn burned the decree of excommunication, he planted the seed of the first denomination.
 - a. While he preached Catholicism as wrong, he did not preach it as a sinful believe that would send others to Hell.
3. After the unsuccessful meeting between Luther and Zwingli, it became apparent that though they shared the reformist spirit, they could not worship together which gave rise to the denominations.
4. Lutherans (1521)
 - a. Its teachings were ratified in the Augsburg Confession of Faith
 - i. Justification by faith alone
 - ii. Denominations were branches of the one true church
 - iii. The Ten Commandments were binding on mankind today
 - iv. While baptism was essential, the how of baptism was not
5. Anabaptist
 - a. About the time of Zwingli, many agreed with his early affirmations that infant baptism was not necessary.
 - b. Anabaptist (for "re-baptizers") taught that if one was baptized as an infant, they needed to be baptized once again. They also stood against ties between church and state (which most of the reformers supported in one form or another)
 - i. They would not accept anyone into their fellowship who would not repudiate his Catholic baptism and be baptized again.
 - c. They spread through Switzerland, south Germany, and Holland
6. Presbyterians (1560)
 - a. Based upon the teachings of John Calvin. Their leader was John Knox.
 - b. Its major teachings:
 - i. Predestination
 - ii. The direct operation of the Holy Spirit
 - iii. Infant Baptism
 - iv. No Lord's Supper each Sunday
 - c. Its creed is the Westminster Confession of Faith
7. The Church of England (in America, the Episcopal church) (1534)
 - a. While the straw that broke the camels back was the refusal of the pope to sanction the divorce of Henry VIII, the split had been building for a long time
 - i. Henry established the church with himself as the head.

- b. Their creed is the 39 Articles of Faith and the Book of Common Prayers
- 8. The Puritans
 - a. Not really a denomination, they were a movement of the Church of England, and began as an effort to purify the church of Roman influence. There were two divisions:
 - i. Those willing to patiently work within the Church of England to reform things
 - ii. Those who felt it was a lost cause and left to form independent churches congregational in setup.
 - b. Later, they developed into strict moral agents. They relied heavily on the “inner light” for answers to moral and religious dilemmas
 - c. The Quakers rose from these, with the Quakers relying more on scripture than the “inner light”
- 9. The Baptist Church (1608)
 - a. An outgrowth of the Anabaptist because of their emphasis on the action of baptism.
 - b. John Smyth formally organized it. He and a small group of separatist fled from England to Holland from the persecutions of James I.
 - i. He baptized himself and about 40 followers
- 10. The Methodist Church (1739)
 - a. Founded by John Wesley, an ordained priest of the Church of England
 - b. He, his brother, Charles, and a number of others he studied with at Oxford became dissatisfied with the form and ritual of the Church of England and formed a study group which fasted and visited those in prison.
 - c. They were given the nickname of “Methodist” because of their detailed method of study and prayer at specific times of specific days.
- 11. What does the Bible say about denominationalism?

Principles of the Reformers

- 1. True religion is only found in the authority of the scriptures
 - a. Catholicism substituted authority of tradition and the church for the Bible
- 2. Religion must make sense and be rational
 - a. Much of Catholicism was viewed as irrational—indulgences; image worship
 - b. Unfortunately, this desire for rational religion lead to the development of creeds.
- 3. Personal Religion
 - a. In the Catholic Church, the priest was viewed as the go between for man and God
 - b. Protestants saw every man as a priest with a direct relationship with God
- 4. Spiritual Religion
 - a. Emphasized less the letter of the law and more the spirit.

Questions

- 1. What move by the Catholic Church seemed to motivate the reformers to action?

2. What was the Diet of Worms (please refrain from the obvious jokes)?
3. What motivated John Calvin to protest the practices of the Catholic Church?
4. What does TULIP stand for?
5. Who was James Arminius?
6. What did the term “Anabaptist” mean?
7. How did the Church of England develop?