



St John's Lent Course
Session 3 March 23rd 2022
Study Notes Reformation and its legacy

Review

Session 1 The growth of the church in Acts; its numerical and geographical expansion ;the formation of doctrine based on the Canon, the Creeds and the Councils and the spiritual, intellectual and physical battles that were fought. The impact of Gnosticism and Arianism.

Session 2 The road to Reformation through the Early Ages (100-400AD) The Dark Ages (400-1000AD) and the Middle Ages (1000-1500AD). The influence of Augustine Bishop of Hippo; the collapse of Rome; The creation of the Holy Roman Empire and the links between Church and State; negative and positive influences in the Middle Ages including, in England, the life and ministry of John Wycliffe and William Tyndale; The English Bible.

Introduction

All of these complex strands would reach a focus in the life, ministry and influence of one man- a German monk and Professor of Biblical Studies at the University of Wittenberg **Martin Luther**

MARTIN LUTHER

- 31st October 1517 Nailed 95 theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg - protesting against the system and indulgences in particular
- 15th June 1520 he had a significant bonfire- (a) his ex communication document (b) book of canon law and (c) a document where the papacy claimed to represent Christ on earth
- In the three years between 1517 and 1520 ML moved from questioning the abuse of the system to the system itself!
- In 1517 the building needed a spring clean- now it needed to be demolished! More than mere reform!
- ML had 7 priorities

1. Conscience before Authority

- State government was totalitarian and so was the Church- belief was defined and enforced. Even in science eg Galileo his views of cosmology were rejected,
- He had the courage of his convictions "Here I stand I can do no other"
- Recent stories of the dissident churches in the old communist world and present day China!



2 Truth before Unity

- “my conscience is captive to the truth of the Word of God”
- Freedom of conscience did not mean a "free for all" where you can believe anything! Subordinated conscience to truth
- ML accused subsequently of splitting the church- a schismatic – “unity at any price!!”
- Unity based on the truth of the Gospel

3 Scripture before Tradition

- ML was 20 years old before he read the Bible
- He was` immersed` in religious practice and tradition- Mary; Purgatory; Penance; Indulgences; invocation of the saints (21 a week!); relics; pilgrimage; sacrifice of the mass....
- As a Professor of Theology he taught the Bible to the priests in Latin- he would translate the Bible into German and teach it to the people
- “**Sola Scriptura**”- by scripture alone- traditions are subservient to the Bible and not on a par with it.

4 Faith before Works

- Luther was tortured by a central question “How do I get right with God?”- a Jesus Plus agenda which would earn merit!
- He discovered that if you can’t buy forgiveness you can’t earn forgiveness
- He had been taught that salvation is about belief and works.
- He discovered (Romans) the truth that “The Just shall live by Faith”
- **Sola fidei** – by faith alone
- “We are saved not by good deeds but for good deeds!”- ML

5 Grace before Sacraments

- Magical view of the sacraments saw grace parceled up in them- administer the sacraments and you received grace “unmerited favour”)
- Baptismal regeneration – “christening” superstitious views that a child's eternal destiny is dependent on their being baptized
- Mass Sacrifice “transubstantiation ; a priest at the altar
- If grace is administered in this way then where does that put the thousands of Christian believers in the Salvation Army or the Quakers for example!
- ML’s actual view on both baptism and the Lord’s supper were incomplete and later extended by other reformers such as Zwingli (Swiss) and John Calvin- but he still had the principle right



6 People before Priests

- Hierarchy of Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Priests and People produced an artificial distinction between clergy and laity
- Priesthood of all believers; high priest is Jesus; his “vicar” or representative on earth is not the Pope but the Holy Spirit!
- Different functions and roles and gifts and the need for **MINISTERS** not priests- shift from OT to NT patterns of leadership and ministry
- The dangers today of priestcraft , castes and the paralysis of priest dependency
- Christchurch Fulwood Sheffield church notice board "Ministers- every member of the congregation!"

7 Christ before the Church!

- The Head before the Body!
- ML challenged the view that the Church spoke infallibly.
- Called the Papacy “antichrist!” – meaning not "against" but “instead of”

“What happened next?”

- (a) Reformers
- (b) Romans
- (c) Radicals
- (d) Revivalists

1. The Reformers- In Germany, Switzerland and England

(a) Germany

- Luther challenged the system and removed much of the theological and ecclesiastical apparatus of Rome but he did not dispense with everything
- Luther removed The Pope, the Bishops; Purgatory, Indulgences and the extra sacraments but much catholic form and tradition remained- candles, crucifixes, images
- Under the patronage of the Princes of Germany, individual states adopted either Lutheranism or catholicism as their official faith depending on the allegiance of the Prince
- Link between church and state remained (cf HRE etc)
- Scandinavia also embraced Lutheranism
- Luther only went so far- like breaching a dam he dislodged the foundations but a torrent of reform would follow.



- He took the church for example to a "receptionist position on the Lord's Supper- Faith lies in the receiver not the presiding priest- Invitation "Draw near with faith...receive....."

(b) Switzerland

- **Zwingli** was an RC priest who predated Luther and like him came to faith through reading the Greek NT
- Based in Zurich which became effectively protestant
- Disagreed with Luther over the Lord's supper- purely a visual aid!
- **John Calvin**- brilliant scholar and lawyer converted in 1532 again through reading the NT- imprisoned in Paris for his views.
- He escaped to Switzerland, initially Basel and later Geneva
He did 6 things in Geneva
- **(a) He cleaned up the city** (note the link between church and state)
- **(b) He wrote a profound treatise** on Christianity called "The Institutes of the Christian Religion" - with its emphasis on the Sovereignty and Will of God- predestination v freewill- Calvinism
- **(c) He introduced Presbyterian church government** through pastors, elders and deacons- the last two being laymen
- **(d) He simplified worship**- hymns and psalms and no organs! (Luther and the organ controversy- an instrument from the beer halls!)
- **(e) He influenced France** (via the Huguenots) who would be heavily persecuted and fled to East Anglia and the Netherlands- (The "wool churches of East Anglia- Flemish emigrants)
- **(f) He influenced Scotland** (John Knox) "Lord give me Scotland or I die!" The Reformation ran more deeply in Scotland than anywhere else!

(c) England

- Muddled; compromised; political pragmatism
- Henry 8th- break with Rome over his marriage arrangements
- Head of the Church- Replaced Cardinal Wolsey with his friend of Thomas Cranmer
- The Pope had already made him "Defender of the Faith" because prior to his dispute with Rome he had written an anti Luther tract!
- Dissolution of the Monasteries and Bibles were placed in every parish church
- Wanted the C of E to remain Catholic but he reckoned without Tyndale's Bible- a copy in every parish church in England



- Left England in ferment
- Marriage for Priests, a Protestant Lord's Supper, Prayer Books of Cranmer
- Thomas Cranmer (1485-1556) was the architect of the Church of England.
- Under the Act of Uniformity, and after Henry's death in 1547, a group led by Cranmer produced the first Book of Common Prayer (1549) under the patronage of Edward VI
- 4 years later in 1553 he prepared initially 42 Articles of Religion- later reduced to 39.
- After Edward's premature death in 1553, the Catholic reign of Bloody Mary began
- -300 ministers, leaders and bishops put to death- most famously Latimer and Ridley (Oxford) (Be of good courage master Ridley and play the man that by the grace of God we shall light such a fire in England that will never be put out")
- Cranmer himself initially recanted but then repented and when brought to the stake he in 1556 famously thrust first his arm into the flames- the arm that had once revoked his Protestant position!
- Elizabeth I's reign proved decisive in defining the Church of England (1558-1603)
- She disliked Rome and also disliked people like Knox in Scotland.
- Services were quite Roman in style but Protestant in theology- the legacy exists to this day in the way that the Anglican liturgy and the RC liturgy is very similar "We talk the same language but we do not mean the same thing!"
- BCP (1662) and 39 articles provided the reformed benchmarks of the Church of England
- Elizabethan settlement established the C of E as a middle way between extreme Catholicism and extreme Protestantism.
- The Authorized (King James) Bible was published in 1611 and would be the definitive Bible translation for the best part of 300 years and would be one of the driving forces in the revivals that were to follow.

2. ROMANS

- **Reaction of Rome to the Protestant Reformation**
- "The Counter Reformation" 3 elements
- (a) Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuit Movement - the RC Martin Luther- fervent zeal- fair means or foul- missionary endeavours outside Europe eg Francois Xavier in the Far East
- (b) The Council of Trent- met 25 times between 1545 and 1563- affirmed most papal doctrines and set the course for Catholicism until VATICAN 2 in the 1960's



- (c) Revived the Inquisition- wipe out most protestants in southern Europe and Ireland- those countries which remain predominantly RC until this day.
- **Persecution of Catholics persisted for centuries**
- eg Gordon Riots as late as 1780 and the ministry of Bishop Richard Challoner who died in 1781 and spent much of his life in hiding from anti papist protestors
- Lutherans incidentally persecuted the Annabaptists as well!
- The Protestant tradition has a lot to answer for in history

3. RADICALS

- These were the extreme left of the Reformers- asked fundamental questions about, for example
- (a) the link between church and state (which still existed in Lutheran Europe)
- (b) the evils of religious wars and the importance of pacificism
- (c) The administration of baptism as an adult rite and not something done to children
- These groups included the Brethren in Germany ; the Anabaptists; the Mennonites etc
- collectively known as the Independents and the spiritual fathers of the Free Church traditions within the Protestant Faith
- Later on in the Elizabethan period, English dissenters were known collectively as the Puritans who effectively withdrew from the C of E
- Their lives were made uncomfortable and some were sadly persecuted by the established churches- some fled to Holland
- the Pilgrim Fathers set up a land where there would never be a historic link between church and state- the USA!

4. REVIVALISTS

- **Over the subsequent centuries there were a series of spiritual movements which were generally, but not exclusively related to several things**
- (a) The politics of religion
- (b) The spiritually bankrupt nature of the established churches with their mechanistic rituals and rote formalism.
- (c) The general moral and spiritual corruption in society
- (d) “End times thinking”- as wars and revolutions swept across Europe- “What is the world coming to? Would Jesus return
- (e) A desire for deep faith and personal commitment to Christ
- (f) A desire for simple New Testament styles of church life.



Finish by mentioning some individuals who changed the spiritual landscape of both the Old and the New World.

9 Individuals who changed the spiritual landscape

(a) George Fox (1642-1691)

(b) Zinzendorf (1700-1760)

(c) John Newton (1725- 1807)

(d) John (1703-1791) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

- Godly parentage of Susannah (prayer every day!)-
- Studied at Oxford- joined the Holy Club run by Charles
- Called “Methodists” because of their commitment to a disciplined lifestyle and holy living
- Met Moravians and German Pietists
- Converted in a meeting at Aldersgate Street in London reading Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans “Heart strangely warmed” (24th May 1738)
- John preached 40,000 sermons, travelled 250 miles on horseback- thrown out of the Cof E- established circuits, lay preachers and class meetings hand in hand with a revival in classic hymnody led by Charles.
- 1744 first national Methodist Conference in London
- Numerous spin offs including Primitive Methodists and the Countess of Huntingdon connection.

(e) George Whitfield (1714-1770)

(f) Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

(g) John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

(h) John Darby

(i) Edward Irving

Discussion Questions

1. Luther Wesley and others were profoundly influenced by the Reading of Scripture. Look at 1 Timothy 3v10-17. What do these verses tell us about the purposes of Scripture ?
2. “The just shall live by faith “ Look at Romans 5.v1-8 What do these great verses tell us about what Christ has done.
3. Reflect as a group on your own experience of Bible reading and the part it plays in your life. Talk about the challenges and blessings of reading the Bible regularly



1 Timothy 3v10-17

¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

¹¹ In the same way, the women^[a] are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

¹² A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³ Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Reasons for Paul's instructions

¹⁴ Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing to you with these instructions so that, ¹⁵ if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. ¹⁶ Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great:

He appeared in the flesh,
was vindicated by the Spirit,^[b]
was seen by angels,
was preached among the nations,
was believed on in the world,
was taken up in glory.

Romans 5: 1-8

Peace and hope

⁵ Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we^[a] have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we^[b] boast in the hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only so, but we^[c] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.