

## 21F. 059 ocw course materials

### I. Protestant Reformation

In 1500, one church united Europe. 50 years later, this was not true—end of the middle ages.

The upheaval of protestant reformation marked new era of European civilization.

In retrospect we can see they took the first and most important steps towards:

- greater individual freedom of conduct
- more tolerance of differing opinions
- more separation between secular and religious sides of life
- launched modern history

### Reformers

-as 15th cent went on, many critics looking back to the bible for guidance about the way to live Christian life, since the clergy were not doing a good job.

-religion was so entangled with everyday life that separation was unthinkable, which was not always good for the Church.

-money short in parishes: priests became more rigorous about collecting tithes

#### **Q: Define tithe.**

-portion of parishioners' produce (tenth, twelfth) to which priests were entitled

-led to resentment and resistance which then tempted churchmen into trying to secure their rights by threatening to refuse people the sacraments and to excommunicate them if they didn't pay up

-this serious business when people believed they might burn in hell forever as a result

#### **Q: What were indulgences?**

-one of the methods to raise money for the church was to license more salesmen of 'indulgences'

-these were preachers who, in return for a contribution to the funds needed for St. Peter's, gave the pope's assurance that subscribers would be let off a certain amount of time in purgatory

#### **Q: What is purgatory?**

-part of the afterworld in which soul was believed to be purged and cleansed of its world wickedness before passing to heaven

### **A. Martin Luther**

**Q: In 1517, Martin Luther posted '95 Theses,' protesting indulgences and other papal practices. The university and ruler of Saxony stood by him, along with**

**clergy who disapproved of the teaching and practice of the roman clergy. Who else might have supported him?**

-the poorer people who had grievances against tithe-gatherers and church courts,

-greedy princes who coveted wealth of church

-others who simply took his side because their traditional or habitual rivals came out against him

Martin Luther said that the church itself and even attendance at the sacraments was not absolutely necessary to salvation, but that men might be saved if they had faith in Jesus Christ. he was teaching that in the last resort it was possible to hope to be saved even without the church, by simply relying on your own private relationship with god. It has been said that he dethroned the pope and enthroned the Bible, God's Word, which every believer could consult without the church coming between him and it. A view putting such stress on the individual conscience was revolutionary. So, not surprisingly, Luther was excommunicated, but he went on preaching and won wider and wider support

### **Treatise on Governmental Authority**

**Q: What are the two governments, according to Luther?**

-47/ spiritual and temporal

**Q: But do people need temporal law?**

-46/ no, spirit is in heart. law is only for lawless

-55/ temporal law can't govern your spirit.

**Q: But then he says that the sword is beneficial, right? [50]**

**Q: Can there be a common Christian government?**

-48/ no

**Q: But what is Christian authority?**

-62-3/ only possible if everyone is equal. but why can't this work with Christians?

-what must you have? consent. rule by inculcating god's word.

**Q: can someone be compelled to believe?**

-58/ no.

**Q: What are some repercussions of Luther's work?**

1. greater emphasis on translation and dissemination of bible

2. now that it is easier to read bible, increased cultivation not only of literacy, but also of education in general

3. impetus to educate in vernacular

4. more newspapers also printed, and more regularly

-Originally literacy was encouraged for religious purposes, but then it unwittingly supported a stronger sense of national identities. People identified more with national language than Latin.

## **B. John Calvin**

-We can see Calvin as a kind of second-generation reformer who responded to Luther's impulse

-Europe is in chaos, papal authority has been shaken. Calvin wants order, he wants to diminish the authority of secular powers and get the individual to discipline himself, it is a question of self-government. He wants to produce a community of sanctified individuals who will properly order themselves

### **Q: Compare Luther to Calvin**

-Luther asks, why do we need to clean up god's creation, god's work, with charity? Luther decides that the purportedly god-given habit of charity is unnecessary and dangerously misleading

-for Calvin, things are a little different

### **Q: If worldly existence is a test, who passes and fails the exam?**

-actually, for Calvin everyone failed the exam-- so it is only out of god's grace, benevolence and generosity that anyone has the possibility to pass into the afterlife

-this grace wouldn't be grace if it weren't free, that is if you could somehow earn it or pay for it or afford it.

-it's a gift

### **Q: Now, does Calvin think god is unjust?**

-no, god can't be unjust because he doesn't owe anyone anything. he just is.

Calvin's **Institutes of the Christian Religion** can be read as a systematic exposition of his theology-- and here I stress the word system, there's a real rigor emerging in the Protestant Reformation

Calvin conceived of his reformatory work in a broad public and political setting, he set out not only to reform the faith, but also to transform the city itself

**-sola fide**      **sola scriptura**      faith, scripture alone

-scripture alone-- Calvin's emphasis on this important because it propounds a new norm of religious authority.

-only the bible was acknowledged as a true source of Christian truth.

-so this meant the repudiation of the authority of the church-- the decisions of the church councils, the papal pronouncements, in fact everything that the reformers called 'human traditions'

-corollary to this stress on the word was the idea that each man must read the bible for himself. so this vastly increased each individual's religious responsibilities. increase literacy.

**Q: What's a vocation? What's a Christian vocation?**

- all human endeavors, not only the clerical ones. all are the fulfillment of a divine call.
- the most menial work, performed in response to god's call, was endowed with religious significance. all work is related to the divine purpose.

Catholics saw Protestants as the 'great destroyers' as they

1. decentered the primacy of the sacraments,
2. did away with the notion of transubstantiation
3. the primacy of the clergy
4. celibate clergy

Like Luther, Calvin holds that good works cannot save us, for our destiny is predetermined. However, good works are signs of the election

**Q: Trace a few main themes in Calvinism: predestination, inner discipline, existence of evil, god's supreme power, question of works**

-predestination

-191/ election happens before creation. significance? that we're not capable of putting ourselves up for election

-192/ our election didn't cause election

-202/ Calvin asks, is god a tyrant or a judge?

-but it's a sin to investigate this. why? because it presupposes that something came before god, that he isn't supreme

-god's power

-203/ we're all sinners

-204/ what does he say about the clay that makes the different pots?

-205/ predestination pales in comparison to god's act of creation

-works: is it fatalist to subscribe to notion of predestination?

-212/ no.

-why not?

-213/ election should make us work harder. work proves our election, gives us confidence

-215/ stress on self-discipline