

Lecture 13 – Reformation & Revival: The Results of the Protestant Reformation

“It is a pet idea of mine that one gets more real truth out of one avowed partisan than out of a dozen of your sham impartialists—wolves in sheep’s clothing—simpering honesty as they suppress documents. After all what one wants to know is not what people did, but why they did it—or rather, why they thought they did it; and to learn that, you should go to the men themselves. Their very falsehood is often more than another man’s truth.” Robert Louis Stevenson

“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee”? Psalm 85:6

Background Reading

Gonzalez, chs. 12 and 13

Prayer

From Psalm 79

“Remember not, O God, The sins of long ago;
 In tender mercy visit us, distressed and humbled low.
 O Lord, our Saviour, help, and glorify thy name;
 Deliver us from all our sins, and take away our shame.
 In thy compassion hear thy pris’ners plaintive sigh,
 And in the greatness of thy pow’r save those about to die.
 Then, safe within thy fold, we will exalt thy name;
 Our thankful hearts with songs of joy thy goodness will proclaim.” Amen.

Reformation & Revival: The Results of the Protestant Reformation

I. Division

A. Roman Catholic and Protestant churches (Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Anabaptist)

B. National “solutions”

1. Germany—Religious Peace of Augsburg (1555)—*cuius regio, eius religio*

2. France

a. Persecution of Protestants

1) Calvin’s letters to “the five prisoners of Lyons” (1552-53)—“Since it pleases [God] to employ you to the death in maintaining His quarrel, He will strengthen your hand in the fight, and will not suffer a single drop of your blood to be spent in vain.”

2) Calvin—“Tears and prayers are our weapons.”

3) New Protestant theories of government (including resistance if necessary)—Francis Hotman, Theodore Beza, and Hubert Languet

4) St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre (August 23, 1572)

b. Edict of Nantes (1598)

3. The Netherlands—war with Spain

a. William the Silent

b. Truce in 1607 divided the area into a Protestant north (Holland) and a Catholic south (Belgium)

Abraham Kuyper: “In the Calvinistic Netherlands...all those who were persecuted for religion’s sake, found a harbor of refuge. There the Jews were hospitably received; there the Lutherans were in honor; there the Mennonites flourished; and even the Arminians and Roman Catholics were permitted the

free exercise of their religion at home and in secluded churches” (*Calvinism*, 158-59).

II. Reformation

A. Ministry—Protestant pastor-preacher

B. Theology—Protestant Confessions

1. Lutheran

a. Augsburg Confession (1530)

b. Formula of Concord (1580)

2. Reformed

a. Gallican (French) Confession (1559)—Calvin

b. Scots Confession (1560)—Knox

c. Belgic Confession (1561)—Guido de Bres (1522-67)

d. Second Helvetic (Swiss) Confession (1562)—Heinrich Bullinger

e. Heidelberg Catechism (1563)—Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus

f. Thirty-Nine Articles (1563)

3. Anabaptist - Schleithem (*this point is not on the CD lecture*)

C. Arts

1. Art

Francis Schaeffer: “Perhaps we wish that the people of the Reformation had taken these works [of art] and put them in a warehouse for a hundred years or so. Then they could have been brought out and put in a museum. But at that moment of history this would have been too much to ask!” (*How Should We Then Live?* 88)

2. Music

Congregational singing: Lutheran hymns and Reformed Psalms (translations by Clement Marot and Theodore Beza; tunes by Louis Bourgeois)

“For every occasion, it seems, an appropriate verse would leap to the tongue of a Huguenot. And all over France, wherever Huguenots were confined...guards and jailers became familiar with the Psalms” (James H. Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition*, 38).

D. Economics (Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*)

E. Culture

“Through the extraordinary dynamism and brilliance of his colleagues, agents, and successors, Calvin’s ideas were fashioned into one of the most potent intellectual forces history has known, directly comparable in its influence and pervasiveness to the more recent rise of Marxism. The German sociologist of religion Ernst Troeltsch suggested that it has been at two points only that Christianity has been able to decisively transform human culture and civilisation: during the Middle Ages, through the scholastic synthesis of Thomas Aquinas, and in the early modern period, through Calvinism” (*A Life of John Calvin*, Alistair McGrath, xii).

III. Revival

A. Many defects and disappointments

B. Protestant spirituality

1. The Word

2. The Psalter

3. The Lord’s Day

4. The Lord’s Supper

5. Everyday life

For Further Study

**Spirituality in an Age of Change: Rediscovering the Spirit of the Reformers*, Alister E. McGrath

A. Read John Calvin's "Letter to the Five Prisoners of Lyons." Among the most moving of Calvin's letters are three he wrote to "the five prisoners of Lyons" between June 1552 and July 1553. Five young Frenchmen, trained in the theological school at Lausanne, returned to their homeland in April 1552. There they were betrayed and arrested. Transferred from dungeon to dungeon, during a trial which lasted more than a year, the young men never wavered in their constancy for the Reformed faith. Calvin and the church in Geneva did all they could to secure the release of the prisoners, but in vain. Calvin's letters supported them and encouraged them during their ordeal. Finally, they were sentenced to be burned at the stake. Calvin wrote to them when he heard the news (on March 7, 1553), assuring them that Geneva would do its duty "in praying that [God] would glorify Himself more and more by [their] constancy and that He may, by the consolation of His Spirit, sweeten and endear all that is bitter to the flesh."

Calvin's final letter to the five (May 15, 1553) is included here. Footnote (1) describes the death by burning of the five prisoners. Point out features of Calvin's exhortation which illustrate or define the Protestant and especially the Calvinist steadfastness in persecution.

B. Read "The King's Strategem" by Stanley J. Weyman from *The Oxford Book of Historical Stories* (Oxford, 1995), 147-56. Historical fiction, when done well, can be both informative and interesting. As Michael Cox puts it, in his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Historical Stories*: "History is too important to be left solely to historians. Or, to put it less provocatively, historical fiction shows that there are parts—important parts—of the experience of history that the professional historian cannot be expected to reach. Such is the thrust of the 'little word of warning' Conan Doyle puts into the mouth of Brigadier Gerrard: 'When you hear me speak, you must always bear in mind that you are listening to one who has seen history from the inside. I am talking about what my ears have heard and my eyes have seen, so you must not try to confute me by quoting the opinions of some student or man of the pen, who has written a book of history or memoirs. There is much which is unknown by such people, and much which will never be known by the world.'"

The following story hardly comes up to such lofty ideals but it is fun to read. Stanley J. Weyman (1855-1928) was an English barrister who wrote many best-selling novels (a kind of early John Grisham).

"The King's Strategem" is a story about Henry of Navarre, still a Huguenot, and his struggle to claim the throne of France. It captures something of the mood, drama, and intrigue of that fateful period but hardly touches the deeper issues separating Catholics and Protestants nor does it reveal much about the inner life of Henry, who became King Henry IV of France, converting to Catholicism to secure his throne, with the cynical words, "Paris is worth a mass."