

CHURCH HISTORY

"Now these things took place as examples for us..."

Lesson 15

Huldreich Zwingli



Reformation - Pt.2

Reform Movements of Zwingli, Calvin and the Anabaptists

Reformation in Switzerland

Switzerland was most independent nation in Europe. Divided into 13 cantons, operating as independent states tied together in a loose confederacy. Reforms spread from one canton to another with local governments often making decisions about whether to go Catholic or Reformed.

The two major figures are Zwingli and Calvin. These men lead two separate reformation movements that fail to unite in their lifetimes, mainly from differences on the doctrine of transubstantiation/consubstantiation. A third more radical movement, called the Anabaptists, will become prominent during this time, also. All three groups will have major influence in Europe

Huldreich Zwingli - (1484-1531)

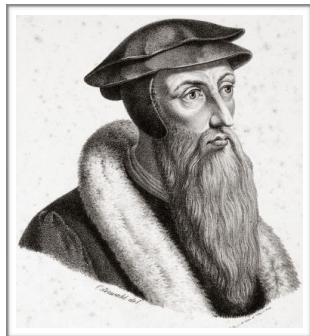
As is true of most of the Reformation leaders, Zwingli was a Catholic priest who began to study the Bible for himself. (Almost all the Reformers begin their path with personal study of the scriptures.) By 1516 he is opposing Catholic abuses such as indulgences.

When Erasmus' Greek text of New Testament was published in 1516, Zwingli made personal handwritten copies of the letters of Paul and memorized them in Greek.

In 1519 the black plague spread through Switzerland. This sobering experience coincided with his discovery of Martin Luther's writings. He began to seriously question, not just Catholic abuses but the authority for their teachings. His earliest challenge was concerning requiring of the church tithe. He also married secretly in 1522 but did not have a public ceremony until two years later.

Through Zwingli's influence several cantons began to reject Catholicism and follow reformed teaching. Catholic teachings continued to be rejected as having no biblical authority and, in 1525, Zurich banned the Mass. Zurich's view of biblical authority was nothing should be practiced that could not be proved by the

John Calvin



Calvin's Theology was rooted in a belief that the absolute sovereignty and fore-knowledge of God required Him to predetermine every event and action in the universe, including whether an individual would be saved. His doctrine is often represented by an Acrostic of the word tulip:

1. Total Depravity - One is born inheriting the curse of the sin of Adam, giving man a depraved nature.
2. Unconditional Election - God predetermined each person's eternal destiny, choosing the elect before the world began.
3. Limited Atonement - Since God predetermined part of mankind to perdition, Christ atonement was intended only for the elected.
4. Irresistible Grace - The elect who were destined for salvation, could not resist God's grace.
5. Perseverance of the Saints - It is impossible for those predetermined for salvation to fall from grace.

scriptures. This was stricter than Luther who believed anything not specifically prohibited by scripture was allowed. Zwingli's Calvinistic views also differed somewhat with those of John Calvin. The more radical Anabaptist movement will arise out of Zwingli's followers. We will discuss the Anabaptists later in this lesson.

Some strongly Catholic cantons united to stop the spread of Protestantism. Eventually war broke out. This was partly the result of canton governments determining which religion their canton would practice. Efforts to retake Reform cantons by Catholic ones led to military conflict. In the end little changed, other than Protestants being tolerated in the Catholic cantons. However, Zwingli served as a chaplain to the army during this time and was killed on the battlefield. His death slowed the spread of his Reformation beliefs.

By 1549 the Zwinglian and Calvinist movements were united. But Zwingli was a great influence in the Reformation and is not always given his due because of the great influence of Calvin, who outlived Zwingli by over 30 years.

John Calvin (1509-1564)

Almost all the churches today who trace their roots to the Reformed faith of this period, essentially follow the theology of John Calvin. He not only popularized his theology but championed the presbyterian form of government. This gave control to the local churches, although they were still tied together through presbyteries and synods of elected church officials.

E.E. Cairns suggests that Luther's role in the Reformation was as a prophetic voice and Calvin's was as the organizer. Calvin's background in the confederacy of cantons influenced his interest in representative church government while Luther's background in monarchial Germany influenced his desire for aristocratic and government support. One other significant difference between these two Reformation giants was Luther believed only in the predestination of the elect. Calvin believed in predestination of both the saved and the lost.

Calvin spent most of his life in Geneva. He was exposed to Reformation ideas in college and by 1533 he was fully converted to the ideas of the Reformation. By 1536 he had completed his greatest work - *The Institutes of Religion*. He also wrote commentaries on every book of the Bible except 2 & 3 John and Revelation (which he said he did not understand). Calvin was French and his earliest influence was in the western French speaking cantons of Switzerland. In Geneva he became the major figure of the region. He influenced the form of government which included a committee called the consistory, made up of church officials. It supervised theology and morals. It had the

Anabaptists

.....



The term means to baptize again. These people rejected infant baptism, requiring all, including those baptized as infants to be immersed as believers.

power to excommunicate and could call upon the government to carry out more severe punishments. Between 1542 and 1546, 58 people were executed and 76 exiled for their beliefs or their wayward lives, with more in subsequent years. Though holding no official office, Calvin ruled Geneva with an iron hand. In this he continued the Roman Catholic forms of discipline. Calvin died in 1546.

Calvin's version of Reformed theology would spread into France, Germany and Hungary. It would reach Scotland through the influence of John Knox, who spent time in exile with Calvin in Geneva. Ireland would also be influenced. It can be said that John Calvin has had the greatest influence on churches who came out of the Reformation movement and that influence continues to today.

Anabaptists

The Reformation Anabaptist movement manifests itself among Zwingli's reformers, emphasizing the authority of and preaching from the Bible. The movement has many different groups within it, some very close to New Testament Christianity, and some may even be identified as New Testament Christians. Because of their insistence on the autonomy of the local church, beliefs are varied and it is not fair to paint the movement with a broad brush, considering them all the same.

John Kennedy points out this group consisted of those who had never been associated with either Catholicism or Reformers. They traced their roots back to those who had always practiced New Testament Christianity. They actually represent a third religious force manifesting itself more prominently as religious freedom and tolerance of independent religious thought is allowed during the Reformation.

Most historians will give Conrad Grebel credit for starting the movement. He was closely associated with Zwingli from 1522-25. He came to consider Zwingli too liberal in his commitment to Bible authority. Grebel, who insisted on believer's baptism only, could not accept Zwingli's recanting his earlier opposition to the practice of infant baptism. Eventually Zwingli tried to stop the Grebel and his followers. He had local authorities fine them and later exiled them. The particular part of the movement will produce the Amish group, led by Jacob Amman (1644-1711). About 120,000 of them would later move to Pennsylvania.

There was also an Anabaptist movement in Germany led by Balthasar Hubmaier (1480-1528). His beliefs included separation of church and state, the authority of the Bible, and the baptism of believers. They came to be opposed by both Lutherans and Catholics. He would flee to Moravia where eventually the emperor ordered he be burned at the stake. His wife was drowned by Catholic authorities.

Frozen in Time



The Amish, Mennonites, and Hutterites all come out of the Anabaptist movement. All survive to today. Most live in close knit communities, living lives mostly separated from the rest of the world. Some are known for retaining lifestyles from earlier generations. Many eschew the use of motorized vehicles, electricity, buttons on clothing and many other “innovations” they consider worldly or ostentatious. Others are more progressive, accepting many modern conveniences.

A communal group developed under the leadership of Jacob Hutter (d 1536). Persecution drove them into South America, Canada, and America. His followers are known as Hutterites and continue to this day.

The Mennonites, led by Jacob Menno in the Netherlands, also came out of this movement. They, too, faced persecution eventually calling themselves “the brethren” to escape the stigma of the Anabaptist name. Persecution drove them out of Europe with some eventually migrating to North America.

Radical Anabaptist movements eventually gave the Anabaptist movement a bad reputation. It is an unfair charge as many followed the scriptures closely. But their opposition to Catholicism, many of the ideas of Luther and Zwingli, as well as some radicalism, resulted in opposition from both Protestants and Catholics.

Beliefs greatly varied but most shared the common doctrines of the infallible Bible as the only authority; a church separated from the state made up of baptized believers only; baptism of believers was by immersion. Among them you will find groups that share many more biblical doctrines on salvation and practice. It is also important to understand segments have their roots in pre-reformation movements like the Waldensians. We must remember that “Anabaptist” is a pejorative name given to the movement by its enemies. (This is true of most separatist movements in the Reformation.) Historical records show that most Anabaptists referred to themselves simply as Christians and called their congregations Churches of Christ. The movement in England can be historically linked to early churches of Christ in the British Isles.

As mentioned earlier, these different movements usually begin with the Bible being available to them in their native language leading to their commitment to the scriptures as the final authority. It is just that some cling to long held beliefs from Catholicism. Others make a much cleaner break with their former beliefs, giving greater authority to the scriptures themselves. Groups like the Anabaptists represent a third group that were already committed to the authority of the scriptures.

We should be grateful to the courage of so many people during this time that were willing to suffer loss of possessions and home, suffer persecution, and even be executed in the most horrible ways rather than give up their new found beliefs. We should hope to be so committed and courageous in our faith.