

Church History



Church History

- *Introduction to Church History*
- *The Ancient Church* AD 1st-3rd centuries
- *The Rise of Christendom* AD 4th-5th centuries
- *The Early Middle Ages* AD 6th-10th centuries
- *The Age of Crusades* AD 11th-13th centuries
- *The Renaissance* AD 14th-15th centuries
- *Conquest and Reformation* AD 16th century
- *The Age of Enlightenment* AD 17th-18th centuries
- *The Age of Revolution* AD 19th century
- *The Modern Age* AD 20th century
- *The Postmodern Age* AD 21st century



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- *The Renaissance* AD 14th-15th centuries
- *Conquest and Reformation* AD 16th century
 - *Martin Luther*
 - *Conquests of Various Kinds*
 - *The New Martyrdom of the Church*
 - *Die Warhet Ist Untödllich*
 - *Calvinists and Mennonites (part 2)*



The Reformation

- The Reformation nestled into three camps:
Lutheranism
Anabaptism
Calvinism



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Actually, if you include England, it's *four* camps, but England was basically just appeasing a fairly snarky King Henry VIII—its *truly* Reformed roots wouldn't come for another century
 - So think of the spectrum so far—
 - Lutherans
("We aren't Catholic anymore")
 - Church of England
("Well, we aren't *Roman* Catholic anymore")
 - Calvinists
("We need some theological structure here")
 - Anabaptists
("Throw it all out and start over from Scripture")



The Reformation

- The Reformation nestled into three camps
 - 1533 Jean Calvin was converted
 - Like Martin Luther, Jean Calvin was trained as both a theologian *and* a lawyer
 - So Calvin strove to apply his lawyer's mind for intelligent, internally-consistent arguments to questions of theology



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 - 1533 Jean Calvin was converted
 - Like Martin Luther, Jean Calvin was trained as both a theologian *and* a lawyer
 - Also that same year, Anabaptist pastor Jakob Hutter moved his congregation away from persecution in Tyrolia, and into the relative peace of Moravia (in Austria)
 - The “Hutterites” preached non-violence and communal living, citing Acts 2:44-47 as a rule of what the church should be like



The Reformation

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 - 1533 Jean Calvin was converted
 - 1536 Calvin published his *Institutes*
 - Though he'd only been a Christian for three years, Calvin had been studying theology his whole life, and had a lawyer's keen mind for putting together data into clear arguments
 - So his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* became one of the first Reformed systematic theology textbooks, laying out a clear and internally consistent view of the Trinity, sin, the atonement, etc., though not everyone necessarily agreed with him on everything



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Years later, a group of Dutch Reformers led by Jacob Arminius issued a remonstrance against the core beliefs of Calvinism, claiming that he'd taken several bits of theology too far, and had ignored key Scriptures in the process
 - In speaking against Calvinism, the Remonstrants developed an excellent, five-point summary of Calvinism, which is still used even by Calvinists today—usually remembered through the use of the mnemonic acronym, TULIP:
 - T**otal depravity
 - U**nconditional predestination
 - L**imited atonement
 - I**rrresistible grace
 - P**erseverance of the saints



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 - In his introduction, Calvin explained that much of the impetus for this text was to take a stand against the Catholics who were enamored with outward form and pomp on one hand, and the chaotic Anabaptists on the other



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 - That same year, Menno Simons left the priesthood to begin preaching Anabaptism
 - He had been born and raised in Friesland, an area occupied—but not entirely conquered yet—by the brutal Landsknechte of the Holy Roman Empire
 - Thus, Simons grew up knowing constant war, violence, and strife at the hands of soldiers



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 - Being a good Catholic priest, he had made it a point not to read the Bible during his priestly training, since Rome taught that the Church existed *before* the Bible—so you must always interpret the Bible through the lens of official, ecclesiastical tradition
 - (NOTE: Later in life, Simons wrote about this period saying, “Such a stupid preacher was I, for nearly two years...”)



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 - Being a good Catholic priest, he had made it a point not to read the Bible during his priestly training
 - But he felt constantly nagged by doubts
 - Why does the Church think that the bread and the wine are really flesh and blood?
 - Why does the Church *hate* these Anabaptists so much that they would kill and maim them in the name of Christ?
 - Why—if he truly *was* a good priest who loved God, as he believed he was—did he feel so guilty about his own drinking and gambling and all of the other things that other priests did so casually?



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 - But he felt constantly nagged by doubts
 - So he began to read the Scriptures for answers that the Church couldn't give him
 - He was shocked to find that the Bible made no clear mention of transubstantiation (a doctrine which the Church was willing to torture and kill people over)



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 - He was shocked to find that the Bible made no clear mention of infant baptism
 - He was dismayed—but *not* shocked—to find that the Bible denounced the very actions that he'd been feeling so guilty about doing
 - But he was shocked that the Church and his fellow priests didn't care about the Bible's commands for holy living



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 - In 1534, Anabaptists under Jan of Leiden had forcibly taken over the city of Münster to create a safe society for Anabaptists
 - Jan set himself up as a king, and set up a commune, ruled by Anabaptist beliefs
 - (NOTE: That may or may not have included polygamy, since the commune-based society was not entirely understood by Jan's enemies, who documented it)



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 - (NOTE²: This seemed to prove Calvin's point about Anabaptists having religion "without any apparent form," and desperately needing some systematic theology)



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 - In 1535, Simons' brother, Pieter—a follower of Jan's—was killed when the Münsterites invaded Bolsward in an attempt to gain more territory



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 - Later that year, Münster was re-taken by the Prince-Bishop Franz von Waldeck, and Jan and his fellow leaders were tortured to death and their corpses hung in public cages (which are still on display at Münster's St. Lambert's Church)



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- By 1536, Simons was utterly disgusted by war and the loss and horror that went with it
 - (NOTE: Emperor Carlos V had just won a decisive victory against the Ottomans at Tunis which was why his rival, King Francis, threw his support toward *Suleiman the Turk*, establishing the Franco-Ottoman Alliance, which lasted for over 250 years...)



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 - **Simons thus broke down and gave himself to the Lord completely, decrying the growing darkness which seemed to be overtaking the world around him**



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - As Menno Simons would later sum up, “I prayed to God with sighs and tears that He would give to me, a sorrowing sinner, the gift of His grace, create within me a clean heart, and graciously through the merits of the crimson blood of Christ, He would graciously forgive my unclean walk and unprofitable life...”

And still later on,

“*True* evangelical faith is of such a nature that it cannot lie dormant; but manifests itself in all righteousness and works of love; it dies unto flesh and blood; destroys all forbidden lusts and desires; cordially seeks, serves and fears God; clothes the naked; feeds the hungry; consoles the afflicted; shelters the miserable; aids and consoles all the oppressed; returns good for evil; serves those that injure it; prays for those that persecute it; teaches, admonishes and reproveth with the Word of the Lord; seeks that which is lost; binds up that which is wounded; heals that which is diseased and saves that which is sound...”



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 - But he sought to purify Anabaptism from the excesses and chaos of movements like that which had taken over Münster
 - He established communities grounded in Biblical theology, non-violence, communal sharing, and holy living



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - In fact, “Mennonite” communities had such a reputation for holy living that several Lutheran and Calvinist leaders actually accused them of being works-oriented, since they stressed actually *living out* what Christ preached
 - But Simons taught that it wasn't works that saved you at all—as he famously prayed:

“Through the merits of Your blood, we receive the remission of our sins according to the riches of Your grace. Through this blood on the Cross, You reconciled all upon earth and in heaven above. Therefore, dear Lord, I confess that I have or know no remedy for my sins, no works nor merits, neither baptism nor the Lord's supper (although all sincere Christians use these as a sign of Your Word and hold them in respect), but the precious blood of Your beloved Son alone, which is bestowed upon me by You and has graciously redeemed me, a poor sinner, through mere grace and love, from my former walk.”



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 - Instead, Simons argued that you couldn't really call yourself a *genuine* Christian if you didn't *genuinely desire* to live in ways that *genuinely honor* Christ—it had to be a personal choice of living for Christ, not just an institutional positioning



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 - So while Calvinists, Zwinglians, and Lutherans were trying to curry favor with secular leaders to protect and promote their groups, the Mennonites were actively pulling away from church/state entanglements
 - In an effort to keep from being “polluted” by an essentially corrupted world, Mennonite communities turned inward and attempted to be consciously independent from any form of local, secular government overseeing the church



The Reformation

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Interestingly, that led to some crucial ripple effects that continue to be felt even now, centuries later
 - First off, that led to Mennonite technology essentially halting its progress in the mid-19th century—*not* because Mennonites are against technology, but because they don't want to be dependent upon any kinds of outside sources for oil, or gas, or electricity, etc.
 - Thus, *theologically*-speaking, to the Mennonites, technology peaked at the moment that you could most efficiently accomplish the most work, without being connected to or dependent on the outside world
 - (and that would've been right before the Industrial Revolution kicked in...
...which is why they tend to look like they just stepped out of the 1800s...)



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 - First off, that led to Mennonite technology essentially halting its progress in the mid-19th century
 - Secondly, their inward, community-based focus subtly altered their ecclesiology
 - For instance, though Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Anabaptism all make use of the practice of excommunication, they do it in very different ways, and for very different reasons
 - Calvin taught that excommunication was to be used to protect doctrine from dangerous heresy (citing 2 Peter 3:16, Philippians 1:15, etc., that false teachers twist the truth, and thus have infected the doctrinal purity of the true church—and citing 1 Corinthians 5:11 that such infections must be removed)



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 - Simons taught that excommunication was to be used to protect the *morality* of the community (noting in 1 Corinthians 5 that expulsion should be for moral sins, not theological differences)



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 - Simons taught that excommunication was to be used to protect the *morality* of the community and thus, it should be carried out by the whole community, acting together as a group
 - In this way, the community continues its shared progression toward moral sanctification and purification in Christ





- So Menno preached that with sufficient time and dedication, the individual and the community can become completely morally perfected, even on this Earth (if we protect ourselves from sin and outward, worldly influences)
- (Of course, there's a problem with that theory, if we just bring our own sinfulness with us, into the "pure" community—if "worldliness" isn't about *them*, but about something sinfully "worldly" within *all* of us)



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 - Even as he aged and became crippled (he frequently signed his works, “Menno the Lame”)



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 - Even as he aged and became crippled, Simons continued travelling as much as he could
(In part because he was constantly on the run from authorities—both religious and secular—who were attempting to eradicate Anabaptism through torture and execution)



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- **Even as he aged and became crippled, Simons continued travelling as much as he could and preaching his emphasis on living out a Biblical Christianity**
 - By the time he finally died in 1561, Simons had brought Anabaptism to a stable, systematic theological footing, and elevated the movement to roughly the same level of prominence as Lutheranism and Calvinism



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- **Sadly, in 1536**
(the same year that William Tyndale and Jakob Hutter were both burned at the stake for heresy—Tyndale for translating Scripture into English, and Hutter for preaching Anabaptism and nonviolence)



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- **Sadly, in 1536, a very tired and disillusioned Erasmus finally died in Basel, from dysentery**
 - At the time of his death, he refused to call for a priest, and did not want the Last Rites read over him
 - As he told his assembled friends, what *truly* matters is your personal relationship with God—not what some priest might say over you (sincerely or insincerely)
 - His final words were “Dear God...” spoken with a gentle smile...

