Volume 19 Issue 23
Originally issued as H4



Global Journal of human-social science: H
Interdisciplinary
Volume 19 Issue 4 Version 1.0 Year 2019
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Stupidity During the Reformation

By James F. Welles, Ph.D

Abstract- At the same time that people were turning away from theological truths and looking outward at the world, those truths were undergoing dramatic revision as both the Christian religion in particular and Western Civilization in general were thoroughly reformed. In the early sixteenth century, with religious man seeking biblical answers to theological problems, Christianity underwent a number of soul searching revisions which were essentially *conservative* in nature efforts to go back to times before the Church became corrupted. Meanwhile, with Renaissance Man seeking human answers to temporal questions and functional solutions to real problems, the secular religions of capitalism and nationalism were taking shape. Thus, as Christian theology was being redefined, the Bible reinterpreted and the Church both split and reformed, rising capitalism was undermining the medieval guild system while growing nationalism was enfeebling the Holy Roman Empire and weakening the papacy.

GJHSS-H Classification: *FOR Code: 130205p*



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2019. James F. Welles, Ph.D. This is a research/review paper, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0 Unported License http://creativecom-mons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/), permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Stupidity During the Reformation

James F. Welles, Ph.D

At the same time that people were turning away from theological truths and looking outward at the world, those truths were undergoing dramatic revision as both the Christian religion in particular and Western Civilization in general were thoroughly reformed. In the early sixteenth century, with religious man seeking biblical answers to theological problems, Christianity underwent a number of soul searching revisions which were essentially *conservative* in nature efforts to go back to times before the Church became corrupted. Meanwhile, with Renaissance Man seeking human answers to temporal questions and functional solutions to real problems, the secular religions of capitalism and nationalism were taking shape. Thus, as Christian theology was being redefined, the Bible reinterpreted and the Church both split and reformed, rising capitalism was undermining the medieval guild system while growing nationalism was enfeebling the Holy Roman Empire and weakening the papacy.[1]

The net result was not a reformation but four of them. Martin Luther began the revolt by trying to reform the Church but ended up reforming Christianity. John Calvin carried on the movement by expounding a theology which ended up putting capitalism on a tenuous metaphysical footing. As a reaction to the Protestant challenge, the Catholic Church staged a Counter Reformation which sought to restore power if not goodness to orthodox Catholicism. Meanwhile, princes were reforming the political realm by framing various sects of the secular religion of nationalism.[2]

In general, the overall reformation of Western Civilization was due to the dilution of Church influence which accompanied the rise of capitalism and nationalism. However, the Christian Reformation (with a capital "R") itself, which splintered the monolithic theocracy of the Catholic Church, was due primarily to a revival of religion. Christianity, if not the Church, thus was saved by reformers who made religion the chief issue again by appealing to the Bible and the spirit of Christ. [3] Hence, although the Reformation was a theological backlash against the temporal Renaissance, it likewise began by looking backward to a renewal of the values of antiquity and ended by stumbling forward into the modern world.

The Reformation really was the Middle Ages' way of ending themselves and releasing the Western mind from the official, singular faith which never had encompassed all of medieval life anyway. As the last great flowering of Medievaldom, it was intensely preoccupied with life in the hereafter, redemption and both the word and world of God. It was characterized by intolerance and superstition, narrow-mindedness and credulity as an upsurge in belief led to an addiction to demons and witches as well as a renewed commitment to Christ and eventually to reason.[4]

While belief was reestablished, the Church and the ecclesiastical structure of the Middle Ages were shattered by the combined attitudes of the princes, people and popes. The princes were particularly vexed not only by the clergy's immorality but by the Church's interference in lay affairs, its claims of overlordship and its financial policies and practices. During the Middle Ages, leaders of the emerging nation-states had gradually lost respect for the Church and come to fear it less and less. By the sixteenth century, when the Church sided with the Emperor against the nobles, the princes reached the point of grumbling about staging an irreligious revolt against the world rule of the Church.[5]

On the other hand, the people objected not to the power of the Church but to its weakness. They wanted a Church which would help them oppose wickedness here on earth: That is, they wanted more Christian control, not less. Their objection to the pope was that he was just another wealthy, strong-armed prince rather than the spiritual leader of the Christian world. In the triangular struggle among the popes, princes and people, the popes sought alliances with various princes but never concerned themselves with their general popularity with the unenfranchised, illiterate, powerless people.[6]

Ultimately, however, the Reformation was caused by the Renaissance popes, who provided the motivation and material for all those who challenged their authority. It was the popes, not Luther, the princes or the people, who destroyed the Western theocracy both by what they did and did not do because of both what the Church was and was not. Far from clashing with secularism, the popes had welcomed it into the Vatican, which they corrupted to the point of shame while inhibiting reforms in theology and thought which would have allowed them and others to understand what was happening. Embracing secular, worldly values while embodying a spiritual void, they eventually caused the splintering of Christendom.[7]

Author: *e-mail: JWelles103@aol.com*

© 2019 Global Journals

Beginning with Sixtus IV (1471-1484), papal deterioration was rapid and complete.[8] Sixtus was a despot who never let his role as servant of Christ interfere with his role as Vatican prince.[9] He was deemed stupid by the nobles of Italy for compounding nepotism with ineptitude by surrounding himself with nitwit nephews and ignorant, bastard sons.[10] Then came Innocent VIII (1484-1492) a weak, compliant family man who provided for his children.[11] Under him, administrative standards reached a level of venality which could no longer be ignored, and in 1488, several high ranking Church officials were arrested and two executed for forging for sale papal bulls of dispensation.[12]

Innocent's immediate successor, Alexander VI (1492-1503), lived a life of deceit centered[13] on his family, the Borgias,[14] rather than on the Church. Despite all his efforts, his son Cesare[a] failed to attain the office the father had so thoroughly defiled.[15] Like his son, Alexander indulged in legendary sins, was responsible for sundry murders and carried perfidy to a new low.[16] As a rake whose conduct firmly established the doctrine of papal fallibility,[17] his disastrous reign, characterized by corrupt excesses,[18] marked the nadir of the Renaissance papacy.[19]

His successor, Julius II (1503-1513), was a crusader who missed the Crusades. Europe was dismayed by the role he played in 1506 in instigating wars and stunned by the sight of the pope riding at the head of his oxymoronic Christian army.[20] Although his behavior was otherwise not scandalous and he did enlarge the papal domain, everyone especially the Church ended up paying for his militarism.[21] He defeated the French but at the price of inviting the Spanish to dominate Italy. Both his costly wars and patronizing of artists (like Michelangelo and Raphael) increased the financial burden on the papacy, and although these monetary problems were certainly severe, the basic problem he posed was that his ends were simply incompatible with Christian means and ideals.[22] Probably his idea of heaven was a one of riches gained through military might.

If stupidity is the obstinate attachment to a dysfunctional goal, Julius was stupid. His goal was personal glory, which he somehow believed would in turn bestow glory upon the Church, and he pursued this goal with an absolute disregard for both obstacles and methods. His disregard of obstacles made him a successful warrior, but his disregard of methods the means to his worldly ends made him a menace to both the Church and alleged God he was supposedly serving.[23]

The unasked question Julius posed was: "What price glory?" His answer was, apparently, "Any!", and he was quite happy to have the Church pay it for his glory in life and death. In life, he needed money to support his chief instrument of papal policy in Italy troops. In death, he needed it to be housed in a tomb whose cost exceeded papal revenues. The price of this "World's cathedral" had to be met by the granting of indulgences, and this was the proximal cause of the Protestant revolt.[24] Although the faithful were offended by the general depravity of Rome and the reluctance of popes to reform, the commercialization of spiritual grace was an insult as well as an expense which touched the devout in a very tangible way.[25] The money grubbing Church[26] had prostituted itself[b] to the point that the granting[c] of future indulgences actually encouraged sin[27] to the unendurable aggravation of thrifty, Bible-thumping Protestants.

Footing the bill for all the papal indulgences was Leo X (1513-1521), who capped the religious irresponsibility of the Renaissance popes. He was an educated, sensitive, pleasure-loving, easygoing, indolent gambler who never understood the game he was playing and losing to Luther. Interested in music, the theater, books, gems and hunting practically everything but the Church, he neglected his official duties and was totally unprepared for the challenge which confronted him. What the Church needed at this point was a pope who would institute internal reforms. What it had was a neoplatonic Christian who did next to nothing to curb its rampant corruption.[28]

At best, Leo was conscientious about maintaining religious rituals. A careless Christian in office, he kept fasts and celebrated Mass daily.[29] At worst, he discredited the papacy. For the sake of fines, he promoted a conspiracy to have himself assassinated, but, unfortunately, the plot failed. In true Renaissance style, he resorted to treachery to dispose of Gianpaolo Baglioni, a dynastic ruler and rival who was invited by Leo to Rome on a safe conduct pass, stupidly accepted[d] and then was safely beheaded.[30]

a) Machiavelli's patron sinner of power.

b) Although much reformed, the Catholic Church remains today the world's largest corporation shaming the most gigantic multinational conglomerates into pettiness as it saps the meager financial resources of the submerging nations of the third world. Would it not be more truly Christian of the Church to use its wealth to help the needy?

c) Technically, they were not sold they were granted, with the grantee just happening to make the Church a gift scaled to the scope of the indulgence and his own financial situation.

d) Why anyone in this age of treachery accepted a safe-conduct pass from anyone remains a mystery even to an expert on stupidity. Perhaps Gianpaolo simply did not know that would-be reformer Jan Hus had been dispatched under identical circumstances 100 years before, (Rabb. p. 26.) [Sad to say, Hussein Kamil, the head of Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction program before he fled the country, did not read this book so was lured back to the same end in 1996 by a promise of pardon from his father-in-law, trustworthy,

© 2019 Global Journals

Although the man on the spot, Leo did not have a clue as to what was going on. If he had, he would not have known what it meant nor what to do about it. Insulated to the point of being unaware of the issues in dispute, he comprehended nether the specific protests nor that the general condition of the Church had been deteriorating for the previous fifty years.[31]

Once the protests became public and widespread, not even his Loftiness could feign ignorance of the revolt which crashed upon the Church. In 1518, when asked to vote a tax for a crusade against the Turks, the Diet of Augsburg replied that the real enemy of Christendom was "The hell-hound in Rome".[32] The popular feeling was that the proper concern of the Church was neither art nor war but the spiritual needs of the faithful. Just as Christianity had developed to fill a spiritual void in the Roman Empire, so did the Protestant movement develop in response to the spiritual vortex created by the internal corruption of the Catholic empire. Thus, it was not so much a response to a failing of the Christian schema as it was a reaction to its replacement by a secular ethic.

The popes, by their very success according to their new standards, alienated those faithful to the old morality while simultaneously fostering hostility among the princes, who became increasingly jealous of the prosperity and influence of the Church. In this context, the conservative nature of the Protestant movement is most noteworthy. In an ideological sense, Protestants rejected the worldly popes and returned to the scriptures to find meaning in their faith and lives. In this way, they were typical of many revolutionaries who break away from establishments which have been corrupted by power and betrayed basic ideals. As it turned out, Protestants were actually interested as much in the economic gains to be made by disemboweling the Church as in doctrine. However, it was not squabbling over riches but theological disputes reflecting doctrinal differences which riddled the Protestant movement from its inception and shattered any chance it might have had at unity and strength.[33]

Undoubtedly, the popes were contributing causes to the debacle in so far as they personified and worked within the cognitive framework of the Church and the age. However, while the idiosyncratic quirks of the Renaissance popes contributed to the onset of the Reformation, they do not explain why and how the Church failed to respond to the dissent which was growing all around it but instead persisted in bringing itself into disrepute. The basic problem was that the popes were usually unwilling and always unable to change the system because *they were the system*. In defining the establishment, they compounded two factors which both corrupted the Church and inhibited reform: One was that the Church had embraced the secular values of the age; the other was that, having become secularized, it refused to heed its many critics, reform and become the spiritual/ religious institution the unconsulted people needed.

Basically, by adopting the values of their general environment, the Renaissance popes became victims of the neurotic paradox. They were continually reinforced by immediate financial rewards as they brought on the longterm ruination of the Church from the top down. In the true spirit of Renaissance artists, they evaluated their policies and acts from their own subjective viewpoint (i.e., as leaders of a rich political institution). Unfortunately for the Church, they perceived their new, worldly perspective itself in its own terms not as a corruption of the sacred Christian schema but as a standard defining a new kind of success.

The problem was not that the Church failed to adapt to new conditions. If anything, the problem was that the Church had become the new conditions. It had become a Renaissance, secular, worldly Church in which few could believe. Far from providing an eternal standard for behavior and rather than reforming the Church to keep or make it a spiritual institution, the clergy led the way to corruption. At a time when some people worshiped money, others power and others the nation-state, devout Christians felt a bit bewildered and very much betrayed by their religious leaders. If anyone could embody a void, the popes embodied the spiritual vacuum which induced the Reformation.

By the early sixteenth century, serious dissatisfaction with and by the clergy had widened and deepened. This discontent was clearly expressed in every medium available both within and outside the Church. [34] Specifically, in 1511, Erasmus laid the ideological groundwork for Luther's impending attack with the publication of his biting satire In Praise of Folly. To everyone but those in power, an outbreak of dissent appeared both imminent and justified.

The impending out-break was all but assured because efforts at reform were pretty much wasted on Church leaders, who had already turned their collective backs on the faith and the faithful. Well before Luther, there had been numerous attempts to stem the decline of the Church, but none had any significant impact. Outside the Church, there had actually been open revolts, like that of Wycliffe in England, and there had also been a number of attempts at Christian reform within the Church, but all had failed. In addition, criticisms not only from outside the Church but from within the priesthood as well were pointedly ignored.

Such potential reforms failed and criticisms were ignored because no one in a position of authority in Rome was looking to prevent the debacle we know

humanitarian Saddam Hussein. (Feith. D. War and Decision. Harper; NY. 2008. p. 189.)]

© 2019 Global Journals

was so imminent. If anything, Church leaders generally refused to acknowledge that reforms were necessary. Behind all Church policy was an assumption by the higher clergy that the Church was invulnerable and eternal. [35] This self-defeating illusion on the part of the papacy of its indestructible permanence as well as a concomitant, exaggerated sense of righteous power were both based on a presumption of moral inviolability common among those who define right and wrong. This complex is typical of people indulging in groupthink and tended to make Church officials deaf to the calls for reform swelling around them.

Basically, these calls came from two kinds of would be reformers, both of which failed to save the Church. The first was the "Rational" reformer, who was usually a scholarly philosopher. He believed in the idealized intellect that the informed mind would bring about improvements in institutions and morality. Such a potential reformer (like Sir Thomas More, for example) carried on the tradition of the Christian humanist, who emphasized the reasoning faculties of man and venerated the role of the intellectual aristocracy.[36]

The other was the "Mystical" reformer, who was medieval in approach and emphasized reliance on divine guidance, inspiration and individual sanctity. According to the fervid mystics, the corruptions of society could not be corrected by pious remedies, which were considered useless and misleading: Society could be saved, however, by purification through exhortation and discipline. This was the approach of the orthodox fundamentalist and was personified in Savonarola.[37]

As a constant source of criticism, friar Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) was a voice of religious distress which pope Alexander VI managed to ignore for seven years while it resounded throughout Italy in the 1490's. He castigated the popes for contravening their own creed and proclaimed, "Popes and prelates speak against pride and ambition and they are plunged into it up to their ears. They preach chastity and keep mistresses...They think only of the world and worldly things; they care nothing for souls."[38]

Of course, some reformers, like Erasmus, combined both approaches into a kind of rational mysticism. He certainly was a humanist scholar, but in religious matters, he emphasized the spirit over formality and piety over reason. Unfortunately, he was a man of conviction with an approach to social reform that was bypassed. His commitment was to Church unity, but as a sixteenth century moderate who disliked fanaticism,[39] he was pushed to the fringe as the zealots of the age piqued themselves and each other to frenzies of excess.

The tragedy of Erasmus was that of the humanists generally failure to achieve reform within the Church. In The Praise of Folly, he pointed out the stupidity of formality, monasticism, ignorance and neglect among the higher clergy.[40] Even though these ills persisted, he and his colleagues could not bring themselves to break with the Church because they were not revolutionaries. They were, if anything, too reasonable, too intellectual, too timid and often too beholden to the Church to lead a popular movement against it.[41]

When the rationalists and humanists failed, reformers perforce turned to mysticism. Reason and moderation had been ignored and thwarted, so the field was left to the intense, spiritual reformers of the age.[42] Among these, Savonarola had already overplayed his righteous hand and been burned at the stake for heresy (i.e., denouncing papal crimes) in 1498. Still, the supreme moral questions of the age would be called by reformers outraged to the point of passion by rampant clerical abuse, and the ensuing break was successful, when it finally came, because princes and priests reinforced each other's concerns about the tax money being used in Rome to abuse the Bible. Like most successful sinners, the popes made the institution they were allegedly serving pay for their indulgences: the Church they secularized lost half of its constituency to the Protestant secession.[43]

Bad as this abuse was, problems within the Church alone did not cause the Reformation. There was certainly little in the Church to prevent the Reforming, but actually the ecclesiastical abuses in the early sixteenth century were no worse than they had previously been. True, under Julius II, the demands for money reached a new high, but there had been indulgence scandals before, and for three centuries, popes had been accused of avarice. Other problems, like corruption of the monasteries, simony, plurality and neglect of duties, had also been common for centuries.[44]

The Reformation was thus not the result of a progressive decline to the point of revolt. It resulted from a failure of belief in the traditional system. Rather than a reaction against long standing errors and excessive abuses in the established institutions, the Reformation was an expression of age old needs which could not be fulfilled within the existing framework of the Church. People did not cease to believe in the Church because of what scandalous monks and corrupt clergymen had done for centuries, nor what Luther did in 1517 but because they had needs that the Church failed to meet.[45]

Under "Modern" tutelage, the Church became generally indifferent and unresponsive to spiritual needs of the unsung people and so irresponsible that Leo X simply dismissed Luther's first challenge as a quarrel among monks. He was half right. Luther was a monk, but his quarrel was not with other monks: It was with the Church, and in the grandest sense, the movement he

© 2019 Global Journals

led became a religious revolution because it led to a reformation not of just the Church but of Christianity.[46] Catholicism would later reform itself in its own fashion with the Counter-Reformation because it had been clearly undermined as a religious institution by Luther's crusade, which was basically a fundamentalist, reactionary movement calling for a return to what was thought to be the pure, unadulterated Christianity of classical times.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was, as was John Calvin, a throwback to St. Augustine, particularly with respect to the relation of the soul to God a medieval issue if ever there was one. With the aid of his fellow Protestants, he abolished purgatory, from which the souls of the dead could be delivered by Masses, and claimed that predestination made the fate of souls independent of priests, particularly after death.[47] Also, he emphatically rejected indulgences, the granting of which helped support the papacy.[48]

As a theologian years earlier, Luther had scrutinized every official way to salvation and found them all wanting. Worse yet, he suspected the reason he could not love God was because God was not lovable. Certainly there was something unlovable about a God who damned people regardless of their merit, for which He was responsible anyway. The essential problem was that the Supreme Egotist[49] was playing God. He was uncontrollable, unregulated, a law unto Himself, a system of intellectual corruption indulging in capricious decisions a celestial case of absolute power corrupting divinely. Love God? Luther hated Him![50]

In his blasphemy, Luther despaired and panicked. He could not pray for help because there was no one to whom he could pray. He became morbidly introspective but finally found his salvation in the Bible, which led him, from 1513-1515, to reject reason and embrace faith. He somehow found God to be compassionate and forgiving even of those who rebelled. This simply had to be believed and accepted because faith[e] alone was the answer[51] despite the fact that the Bible (James 2:25) clearly stipulates that a man proves himself to be among the chosen by deeds and not by faith in itself.

Philosophically, Luther was ironic in his use of logic to reject reason in the cause of faith. He dealt with medieval problems and used a modern method to come up with a primitive solution. He had used reason but could not face the rational conclusion that God was a jerk. Nor could he conclude that the Bible was a book of fables. He was stuck with his religious schema, so his conclusions had to fit into his Biblical/Christian format. The day of reason for its own sake was yet to come.

As one who as a priest had not only read the Bible but taken it seriously–indeed, literally, Luther was nevertheless more a product of his life experience than of thinking, reading or speculating.[52] A stubborn, unruly victim of excessive corporal punishment as a youth,[53] when he visited Rome in 1510, he was shocked to bewilderment by the levity and worldly splendor of papal life he observed and, after an extended incubation period, said so. In 1516, he protested that indulgences were deceptive and pernicious, rested on a false assumption of extra credits of saints and induced complacent immorality rather than contrite piety.[54] A year later, he denounced papal expedients and papal conduct as well and defiantly refused to recant unless shown specifically on Biblical authority where he had erred. He quickly had the people in ferment and princes committed, for their own Machiavellian reasons, to support and protect him from the pope.[55]

Abuse of the Church by its officials was to continue ever after, but 1517 was still a turning point in history: the Church simply failed to turn. This was the year when Martin Luther nailed the clergy to the Church door. As an agent of the Reformers, Luther was inspired by the idea that the Church should live up to itself. It was this peculiar notion which led him to become the greatest whistle blower in history.

Although Luther was a theological rebel, he certainly did not perceive himself as an innovator. On the contrary, as a spokesman for reform, he leveled the charge of innovation against a Church which he contended was really only 400 years old. He objected to the papal theocracy which had developed since the reign of Innocent III and wanted to restore the Church of the eighth century the time when he thought the worldly power of the Church began. His goal was to recover the innocent, virginal Church[56] which had discredited itself by surviving. To him, the Church had simply given up too much by compromising fundamental essentials when it mixed with life in the Middle Ages. He denounced it as a power conscious institution devoid of a Christian conscience and aspired to restore the religious spirit to Christianity.

As an archly conservative, inadvertent rebel who accidentally popularized the individual conscience, Luther did not try to start a new sect: He simply wanted to reform the Church that existed. However, he was more extreme than most reformers in that while others complained about abuses within the Church, he regarded the Church itself as an abuse. As a theological fanatic, he struggled over the relation of man and God and was not as much concerned with ending papal corruption as he was with saving a compromised

e) This is one of the great historical examples of what we now call a transcendental psychological experience. When his ego-sustaining schema was shattered, Luther was forced to fall back on faith in something superior in this case, faith itself.

© 2019 Global Journals

religion.[57] For him, corruption was a side issue that just happened to play into his hands as a reformer.

Luther was not only a conservative rebel but an authoritarian who hated the Church not for being authoritarian but for being slack and corrupt. In fact, he lost himself in the Germanic authority of a Führer Gott whose only commandment was blind obedience and who was unattainable through priests, good works or reason which Luther considered the "Devil's bride", "God's worst enemy"[58] and "The greatest enemy Faith has".[59] If one relied on reason alone, he would not attain faith, and only a fool would think reason could lead him to understand life's mysteries.[60] Reason might be useful in some ways, but, it was useless for attaining faith, which is what Luther was all about. Faith alone would secure God's blessing[61] regardless of good works and despite rational thought.

Ironically, the revolt begun by the authoritarian Luther became essentially a matter of individual rebellion in the true artistic spirit of the Renaissance and prefiguring democracy. Previously, only the Church as Christianity's equivalent of Islam's corporate conscience [62] had perverted God's Word, but now, thanks to Luther's translation of the New Testament into German in 1522 and the whole book in 1534, everyone could pervert it. Every person was to be his own priest, with each reading the Bible and deciding for himself who and what God was. This was moral anarchy, with each individual disregarding externals, concentrating on his own conscience, listening to his own heart and developing his own soul. Luther advocated this intensely subjective approach to religion because he naively assumed everyone else would come to the same conclusions that he had reached. Like Plato before him, he took for granted that most people were pretty much like himself quieter, perhaps, and maybe not quite so gifted, but still basically little Luthers. During the peasant revolts of the early 1520's, he was dismayed to find that some people wanted things quite different from what he did,[63] and when some carried their causes to shocking excesses, he lost confidence in the free judgment he had promoted and defended.[64] Apparently, the people might make up their own minds about the all-defining Bible but not about their own lives.[f]

To his holy dismay, Luther found people were inspired by his spirit rather than his theology, won over by their leader Thomas Münzer's screwy notion that all men are created equal [65] and had come not only to disbelieve the Church but to disobey secular authority. He abandoned them and denied them the right to resist worldly tyranny [66] in a pamphlet with the catchy title Against the Murdering, Thieving Hordes of Peasants (1525). However, while faith in God would bring salvation, faith in the Establishment when coupled with an indifference to political and social iniquities does not bring justice. His immediate legacy was not secular reform but theological division and a century of holy wars that devastated his divided land.[67]

This division began when Luther realized that since the Church was obviously not going to accommodate him, he must start his own. Ironically but not surprisingly, it quickly became institutionalized and developed its own priestly laws, dogmas and doctrines. Although Luther always pictured himself as offering people correct beliefs, his rebellious spirit conquered more souls than did his authoritarian dicta. Protestant disciples piously carried on his tradition, generalized his means to their own ends and claimed their faiths justified their beliefs. Some of these claims were completely lost on Luther, who never could see how any amount of faith could justify Anabaptism, for example,[68] but in such cases, he seemed to be simply a victim of his own success.

Actually, the success of Protestantism was not as much "His" as he thought anyway. Luther succeeded where Wycliffe had failed as much because of the printing press as because of doctrine. With the Bible, rather than the Church or himself established as *the* source of authority and a sufficient number of people with it in their hands, there could be as many popular religious movements as ways to interpret God's Word, and there were.[69]

While Protestantism was thus transforming the religious world, capitalism was reforming the secular world of the sixteenth century. By this time, capitalism already had a long history of its own going back to the Middle Ages, when the guild system gave way to the entrepreneur. As factories developed, so did a business "System", which was supposed to be under rational control.[70]

Behind the rational system, however, was a capitalistic spirit which represented a new attitude toward life and which became something of a new religion for Westerners. In the East, people untouched by the capitalistic spirit today work in order to reach a certain standard of living and then stop. The Western businessman does not stop: He keeps going just to be going. He works for the sake of work because, in true religious fashion, good capitalists developed a sense of shame if they did not work continually while there was still strength and time for more. Thus, the capitalist's schema became an attitude which defined work as an intrinsic good directed toward the good life, which was eventually redefined as prosperity.[71] When carried to a positively fedback extreme, this attitude still produces the workaholic[72] capitalism's equivalent of the religious fanatic.

f) Albeit a trivial example, would you like to dance? Go ahead, but every dance step is a step toward Hell. (Chalkley) Have a good time!

© 2019 Global Journals

Max Weber suggested that, within the Western community, Protestants made better businessmen than did Catholics because of the difference in their attitudes toward work.[73] Certainly the Protestant business spirit proved to be more dynamic and progressive than Catholicism, which was generally stodgy and repressive when and where it predominated. Further, this difference has been attributed to John Calvin (1509-1564) the source of the Protestant work ethic. Commercialism began its development in the Catholic dominated Middle Ages, and Luther exalted common occupations as ways of serving God and promoting self-reliance, but it was Calvin who transcended the biblical notion that "....the love of money is the root of all evil."[74] and gave the spirit of capitalism its theological basis.[75]

Like Luther, Calvin found his way to genuine Christianity via that outmoded pillar of orthodoxy, St. Augustine,[76] and although his theology was suited to the developing commercial class, it was not planned that way. When he sat down to write his great work Chrisianae religiouins Institutio (Institutes of the Christian Religion) published in 1535, he intended to put forth his explanation of God's Holy Word. According to Calvin, God allowed no freedom: As He was all-everything (knowing, powerful, etc.[77]), He planned everything and left people no choice. After planning Adam's fall and condemning humanity to damnation for it, Calvin's all-loving God apparently decided to give some people a second chance via salvation through his Son. These few the elect were Calvinists.[78]

Calvin's rigid determinism could have been (and has been) taken to justify sin if indeed the term would apply, as everything is God's will or fault. However, Calvin set logic aside just long enough to establish the most intense moral conscience[g] in Christendom.[79] This is apparently just a pale reflection of the conscience developed by Calvin's deterministic God, who allegedly listens to Calvinists' prayers, when they ask Him to help them avoid their predetermined sins.[80]

This problem of God creating or allowing sin harks back His original act of creating Adam and then forever tinkering with His handiwork as if he were an organic experiment gone slightly awry. Perhaps it would have been better for all if God had worked just a five day week for He showed the strains of fatigue when setting up Eden. He may have been a slow learner or creationally challenged but for whatever reasons, He decided to start over and benignly flooded out everyone except Noah's upright, uptight family. [81] Their descendants have, struggled ever since to make an economic if not spiritual success of their lives in the context of God's plan, which we are too dumb to understand.

Although Calvinists became noted for their business sense, upright character was essential in all walks of life, and the test of success for a true believer was not economic but ethical. In business, emphasis was on integrity rather than profit, and worldly success was not taken as proof of divine favor for or by Calvinists. Their disciplined faith just happened to engender economic virtues industry, sobriety, honesty and frugality and these advanced them as individuals financially while ameliorating their society generally.[82] There certainly is something to be said for people who abide by such virtues, and Calvinism suffered no shortage of heroes fully committed to the cause. Of course, it was to their advantage that they wasted no time or energy pondering imponderables: Whereas Luther agonized over faith, Calvinists just had it.[83]

A further advantage was that their job on earth was simple and straightforward establish a Holy Commonwealth, and they came nearer than anyone to realizing their own brand of utopia, however self righteously strained it may have been. This was sixteenth century Geneva, which was incongruously an ideal place for anyone ascribing to medieval values as well as a place where work/slave virtues were vigorously applied so that acquisitive businessmen could selflessly fulfill their assumed obligation of public service to the community.[84]

Further, it is altogether ironic that the spirit of classical capitalism has been misattributed to the Calvinists, because capitalism was more developed in Catholic Flanders and Florence before the Reformation than it was in Calvin's Geneva.[85] In addition, Calvin himself would have regarded laissez faire as a moral outrage, while the business class in Geneva regarded his moralism as an outrage. The essence of Calvin's schema was not freedom but discipline, and as the business of Geneva was really religion, not business, he drew up elaborate directives designed to shape all aspects of life in his model city to the Christian ideal. Among these were business regulations, including price and rent controls, which were supposed to assure everyone that economic affairs would be conducted with religious propriety. In later centuries, Puritans would remain firm believers in government regulation of business[86]the defining characteristic of modern fascism while businessmen were morally free to indulge in orgies of undisciplined, cut-throat capitalism.

Thus, the reason Calvinism is associated with the spirit of capitalism is not because of Calvin's attitude toward business but because of his emphasis on discipline and Calvinists' financial success when applying their discipline in a capitalistic society. In

g) In so doing, Calvin was but typical of all great Christian thinkers who invariably evade the moral nihilism that accompanies determinism. I am of a mind with Sartre that we must recognize our actions determine the behavior of others and thus demand that we be moral. (Hecht. p. 457.)

© 2019 Global Journals

succeeding, they did give capitalism its spirit, but that was just an historical accident which occurred because they were working in a capitalistic system.[h] They would have undoubtedly imparted a defining spirit to any system be it agri-cultural, industrial, or whatever in which they worked, as did their direct spiritual descendants, the Puritans, for example, when subduing the wilderness a century later in New England.[87]

Although Geneva was a commercial city, [88] Calvin's totalitarian regulations, far from making it a heaven or haven for capitalists, made it a living satire of hell on earth a theologian's utopian Eden religiously committed to combating secular evils and joys. There was compulsory church service twice daily for everyone, enforced, when necessary, by civil authorities.[89] There were penalties for dancing or having one's fortune told by a Gypsy, and a woman could be imprisoned for wearing clothes made of forbidden materials or donning an immoral hat.[i] To the credit of the citizens,[j] such rules were made the objects of popular ridicule and were routinely ignored if not broken.[90]

Calvin was canny enough to reach a compromise with the business community on economic regulations, but his religious schema folded inward upon itself until Geneva became something of a living nightmare. Regulations regarding religious pursuits made it an offense to laugh during preaching, give the names of Catholic saints to children, be unable to recite prayers, or say that the pope was a good man. To hold office, a Catholic magistrate was required to say, "Mass is bad" and then had to confirm it without qualification. If Catholicism was thus grudgingly accepted, heresy was rigorously combated as treason to God. Denial of predestination meant banishment and denial of immortality or the Trinity meant death,[91] and from 1542 to 1564, fifty-eight disbelievers were executed and seventy-six banished out of a population of about 20,000.[92] As a positive feedback system going to excess during this period, Geneva became less a city of the elect than the select intolerant saints who expelled or executed dissenters and accepted only immigrants who conformed to Calvin's narrow standards for propriety in piety[93] and society.

The regime became not only intolerant of moral waywardness but so sensitive to political opposition that a street fight was interpreted as an attempted coup and the leaders executed or banished.[94] This reaction was based on fear but not paranoia, as Calvin's followers had made plenty of enemies in the fervent pursuit of righteousness.[k] After his death in 1564, the city relaxed, control of the economy reverted to the capitalists, and business ethics returned to their pre Calvinist condition.[95]

Along with Luther's and Calvin's theological reformations of Christendom, there was also the Catholic Church's reformation of itself. This was the Counter Reformation, and it was nearly obviated by the accidental election of Pope Adrian VI in 1522 because, as a reformer, he might have led the Church back to Christianity. However, he could do little to overcome long entrenched corruption in his reign of fifty-four weeks,[96] and with his passing, the Church reverted to form and chose Clement VII to preside over a series of disasters. Protestantism continued to advance while the pope ineptly engaged in self-destructive diplomacy which was designed to thwart the growing power of Charles V but which ended up with imperial troops sacking Rome in 1527.[97]

Although the significance of the Protestant secession took a while to register on the Catholic Church, the sacking of Rome was quickly recognized for what it was divine punishment for the worldly sins (i.e., failures) of the popes and their cronies.[98] Perhaps it was ten years too late, but the realization finally broke upon the Vatican rulers: They were doing something wrong. As their response, the CounterReformation was an intensely conservative movement for internal reform of the Church.

In an age of sectarian splintering and theological invention, the Church leaders sought to achieve Catholic unity by intellectual repression. Thus, the CounterReformation was a revolt by the established powers against freedom the moral freedom of the Renaissance popes in particular and the intellectual freedom of the Renaissance in general. It aimed at uprooting heresies, reforming ecclesiastical discipline and pacifying the Church[99] and was characterized by a strengthened spiritual commitment to doctrine which itself became ever narrower just when worldly knowledge was expanding and growing.[100] Its specific manifestations were the Jesuits, the Inquisition, the Index of Prohibited Books and the Council of Trent.

This repressive spirit of intense Catholicism was embodied in St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) founder of the Jesuit Order and the Church's belated answer to

h) In this regard, they were sort of Protestant Jews, in that they worked hard and succeeded at all types of endeavors in which they were engaged wherever they were.

i) Actually, in many towns in the sixteenth century, ostentatious displays of clothing were regulated by law so as to suppress public extravagance by the bourgeoisie. However, even by the standards of the time, Geneva's regulations were excessive.

j) As an aside, my fourth great-grandfather Welles, as a Justice of the Peace was charged with tracking down persistent sinners in puritanical Wethersfield, CT, in the 1770's. Way to go, Sol. JFW

k) But the righteousness lived on albeit in a the perverted form of the morally incestuous, censorious, prudish "Rodent Fornicators" of the Nixon administration in the early 1970's. With an equal fondness for Billy Graham and break-ins, (Wills.) Nixon knelt every night in prayer for guidance. (Wheen. p.111.) Apparently, God is a Democrat.

© 2019 Global Journals

Luther. A former soldier, Loyola founded the Order upon order: There would be unquestioning obedience to the General in the war against heresy. In accordance with his battle plan, Jesuits were to be zealous missionaries, and through preaching and even more through teaching, they raised the level of the Catholic conscience and improved the sagging moral tone of the Church.[101] However, their efforts to raise the intellectual level of the Church were limited by the determined opposition of the Catholic hierarchy to freedom of thought.

The most concrete expression of the Church's anti-intellectual attitude came in the form of the revival of its most insidious institution the Inquisition. Along with the Index, this constituted a direct counter attack by the faithful against heresy. Although it may be fair for anyone to question the worth of an organization which presumes to save itself by suppressing thought and banning books, Catholics in general in the sixteenth century were not inclined to be fair. More specifically, Church leaders were under attack and intended to survive by using all means at their disposal to defend themselves. Hence, as when in its medieval glory, the tragedy of the Inquisition was that it was not an invention of some madmen but a reaction of otherwise responsible and certainly powerful people who insisted on perceiving a diversity of ideas and, worst of all, conscientious intellectual inquiry as threats.[102]

On the eve of the Reformation, the Spanish had reinstituted an inquisition as a means of achieving national unity. This was but another specific example of the periodic Western passion for a monolithic mind a unitary culture of one ruler, one religion, one race. After the fall of Granada in 1492, Spain was to be orthodox and authorities used bribery and force to win over remaining Moors and Jews to Catholicism. When converts relapsed, the Inquisition became a means to a higher end and was justified by, of all things, national honor. In the face of widespread un Spanish activities, some officials became full-time inquisitors and even specialized some in torture, others in burning. Flesh, thought, the Church and Spain all suffered (although not equally) from these police tactics.[103]

Such sufferings notwithstanding, the success of the Spanish Church and nation in thus suppressing Protestantism led Counter Reformer Pope Paul XIII to set up a general Inquisition for the entire Church in 1542. As a means to European purification, this Roman Inquisition was most effective in Italy, where it had the support of the secular powers. However, even there, this revival of institutional persecution of heretics was milder than its Spanish model, and very few people were executed.[104]

As a more general and broader approach to combating heresy, the Church developed the Index of Prohibited Books a list of books which Catholics were forbidden to read. Like the Inquisition, this had its historical antecedents, as the Church had long been committed to preventing the faithful from reading heterodox literature. As long as books could be produced only by the laborious process of copying by hand, book burning sufficed as an effective means of censorship, but the printing press necessitated a change in strategy on the part of those opposed to the dissemination of information. Thus, in 1515, the Fifth Lateran Council forbade the printing of any book in Christendom without Church permission a method that worked reasonably well until Protestant printers flooded Europe with unauthorized books.[105]

The response to this new threat was the Index (or Indices, as there were many). Early versions appeared in Cologne and Paris in the 1540's but were only of local importance. The first papal list of prohibited works was issued by Pope Paul IV in 1559. As an attempt to suppress books which might corrupt morals, endanger the faith or promote thinking, the Papal Index eventually came to read like a "Who's Who" of world literature. Being listed became a backhanded compliment a mark of distinction which placed an author in the company of, among others, Francis Bacon, Balzac, Descartes, Dumas, Gibbon, Hobbes, Hugo, Hume, Kant, Locke, Mill, etc [106] meaning al-most everyone worth reading except Anonymous.

The Council of Trent constituted yet another aspect of the Counter-Reformation which became, in its way, short-circuited and worked to the long-term detriment of the Church. Meeting intermittently from 1543 to 1563, the Council did effect some internal reforms for the Church and arrested the crimes and blunders which had driven one state after another from the Catholic fold. Theologically, however, it took a hard line and confirmed basically all of Catholic dogma, specifically rejecting the right of individuals to private judgment in matters of faith and morals, reserving for the Church the right of interpreting Scripture, opposing unauthorized circulation of the Bible[107] and setting the stage for the idiotic battle between science and religion which haunts down to this very day.

This uncompromising position of the Council was typical of the generally conservative nature of the whole Counter-Reformation. Threatened by Protestants and attacked by princes, the Church, far from transcending itself, demonstrated the desperation of a besieged mentality trying to reduce cognitive dissonance by turning inward and backward and clinging ever tighter to orthodoxy.[108]

Thus, although the Counter-Reformation did address specific abuses like immorality and corruption, it must be rated a failure because it reaffirmed and perpetuated the basic authoritarian schema of Catholicism. With Western Civilization on the brink of the

© 2019 Global Journals

modern age, the Church remained firmly committed to its medieval mentality and was bypassed. Actually, it was ironic that the Church espoused its medieval doctrine of "Free will" while demanding obedience and conformity from the flock. The modern age is modern precisely because the people make their own decisions, but the Church did not want people thinking for themselves: Doctrine was to come from the top down, and believers were to obey.[109]

It was indeed a tragedy for the Church that it became intellectually reactionary just when Europe was awakening. It condemned not only immorality and heresy but the spirit of inquiry, as faith was to squelch not only misbehavior and doubt but curiosity as well. With the Church's Biblical interpretations becoming increasingly irrelevant to the ever expanding world and changing cultural environment, the intellectual leadership of the West passed to those people who first overcame and then ignored Catholic theology and simply thought for themselves.[110]

This tendency of people to think for themselves was particularly evident in affairs of state, where politicians were coming to grips with the growing spirit of nationalism. Nationalist sentiments developed against the background of the raging religious disputes of the age but (unfortunately for historians) did not conform neatly to any theological arrangements. The Catholic Church both helped and hindered nationalism helping it by weakening the Holy Roman Empire but hindering it by resisting nationalistic attempts to reduce its own influence. On the other hand, Protestantism helped states opposing Rome, although the main concern of Protestants was not the form of the state but the right to worship their way.[111]

Viewed the other way, Protestantism in the sixteenth century was aided by the nationalism of both ruling groups and popular masses. Some ruling princes used Protestantism to help in their struggle against the popes, so in their domains, the Protestants were simply the nationalistic in-group. Such rulers, like Henry VIII (1509-1547) of England, for example, replaced clerical privilege and corruption with secular privilege and corruption as official bureaucrats assumed the trappings and reality of power.[112]

Theologically, the nation states of the sixteenth century, with religion determined by the given ruler, were smaller models of the medieval system. However, the political strains which resulted from religious tensions could be eased, if and when they were to be eased at all, by three different methods: Migration, territorial division and comprehension.[113]

Before the New World opened, the only escape for free spirits was to the east. In the Far East of the day, infidel Muslims proved to be more tolerant of heretics than were either Catholics or Protestants. In politically backward Eastern Europe, feudalism retained the diversity that had been crushed by nationalism in the West, so in Poland, for example, the different sects accommodated each other by agreeing to disagree. In Western Europe, a believer could emigrate to a land of his particular faith, but in each of these, there was little or no tolerance, with even Protestant lands normally officially accepting only one sect.[114]

The second method territorial division was really just a refinement of the first and likewise produced considerable emigration. Local rulers were allowed to decide what the religion would be for their areas with dissenters free to move elsewhere. This later became the method adopted by the Founding Fathers of the United States, and to this day the Constitution (i.e., the First Amendment) prohibits only a *national* religion, leaving states free to unify Church and government[115] should they want to.[l]

The third method comprehension meant that one religion would be officially recognized in an area, but only limited demands would be made on other faiths. This small step away from the West's prevailing "One state, one ruler, one faith" mentality was a giant leap toward toleration. It kept emigration to a minimum, as doctrinal requirements permitted all but the most fanatical dissenter to live with them, and was the method tried by Charles V and accepted by Elizabeth I (1558-1603).[116]

As head of the House of Hapsburg and then as Holy Roman Emperor, Charles would have come down hard on Luther early on had he been free to do so. However, he, Henry VIII, Francis I (1515-1547) of France and Pope Clement VII (1523-1534) were caught up in a tangle of power politics which must have warmed Machiavelli's analytic heart. The basic principle was that the other three would align themselves against any one who appeared to be getting too powerful. Of course, the great beneficiaries of these machinations were the Protestants and the Turks because the pope could not do much about the former and was not willing to help Charles suppress heresy or lead a crusade against the latter lest the Emperor become too strong. By 1550, when Charles was finally free to persecute the Protestants, they were too firmly entrenched for him to have much success.[117]

By then, there really was no longer any hope of solving religious disagreements by reconciling the

l) Of the eleven original thirteen states which framed the Constitution, five permitted or provided for an establishment of religion in the form of tax support for churches an arrangement that lasted in Massachusetts until 1833. (Smylie. p. 117.) Likewise, at the time of ratification of the Constitution, most states had limitations on freedom of speech and the press in the form of laws which forbade blasphemy, libel and obscenity. (Kaplan. p. 50.) *The first amendment guarantees nothing except that the federal government will not do likewise.*

© 2019 Global Journals

various faiths. Nor would an agreement to disagree have suited Charles, since he was basically as intolerant as most people of the time. Having dissident subjects leave the Empire or splitting it up to accommodate the many sects ran counter to his role and image of Emperor, so "Comprehension" was the option imposed by circumstance. Even this compromise was opposed by the German Lutherans, however, thus preventing Charles from realizing a universal solution to the problem of religions which confronted him.[118]

In despair, he resigned and spent the last two years of his life tinkering with clocks, studying maps of his former empire and rehearsing his funeral.[119] His struggle for supremacy in Europe as well as his quest for peace and religious unity had been in vain. He failed because political circumstances were changing while his mind was stuck in its original mold, clinging to the imperial ideal when rising nationalism in Germany made the failure of an imperial reality a for gone conclusion. Likewise, he persisted in his pursuit of religious unity (and even resorted to force) when Lutherism was immovably entrenched.[120]

Worse yet, in failing to understand his times, Charles was not alone. When his approach of comprehension as a possible solution to Germany's religious problems broke down, his political heir, brother Ferdinand, was forced to fall back on territorial division the principle adopted at the Peace of Augsburg in 1555.[121] This was a mixed blessing in that it initiated fifty years of peace in Germany[122] but also set the stage for the Thirty Years' War because the German princes were reacting to their immediate plight while remaining blind to the fundamental issues at hand. As princes, they thought in terms of principalities, not people,[123] and were predisposed to learn from history only those lessons that suited their purpose and supported their position. Specifically, these rulers had learned (perhaps from experiences with the Anabaptists) that subjects should not be left free to exercise judgment in religious matters.[124] The principle of religious freedom was applied to individual states rather than to individual citizens as the right of private judgment, upon which the Reformation had been founded, was summarily rejected by everyone.[125]

The most successful example of this principle of a state religion in a religious state was sixteenth century England.[126] Under the Tudors, royal power reached its absolute apex as leaders of church and state supported each other in an incestuous, religious fascism. Henry VIII represented a culmination of religious nationalism as a king who claimed control of at least all outward forms of worship, and all but the existence of God came to depend on royal whim. His was the first totalitarian state, and the fact that it was supported by an accepting population made it simply all the more powerful.[127] It was not until the seventeenth century that democracy raised its head when Puritans claimed that the state should reciprocate and return the support the people by embodying their moral values.

Actually, in totalitarian Tudor England, the Anglican Church evinced a canny capacity for compromise with the state or at least the self-deceptive ability to pretend that certain theological problems did not exist. The church was a conservative institution which lacked the usual Protestant zeal for saving the world from itself, and its history in the mid-sixteenth century showed how easily masses of people can be pushed through a series of mutually conflicting beliefs,[m] particularly if they are secondary to the identifying schema of the believers. To wit, in 1534, Henry led the country away from the Catholic Church, only to have Bloody Mary return it to Catholicism starting in 1553,[128] only to have her sister Elizabeth re-return it to Anglicanism six years later.[n] There was no one stupid enough even in England to believe the contradictory pronouncements everyone was required to make during this period. It was mostly a matter of taking theology lightly or going mad, and going mad just was not, well, ..."English".[129]

In Europe generally, religious thinkers contributed to this growth of democracy by denying the absolute power of the state. The developing nation-states went to aggravating excesses in some cases and could not be constrained by forces within government nor by any amount of praying. Theologians attempted to counter absolutism by appealing to a universal morality which presumably was binding on states.[130] This was supposed to be "Natural law", which superseded national law and provided a theoretical basis for those who wished to combat arbitrary abuses of power.

In a more general sense, the Protestants' Reformation brought both achievement and failure, with their achievements being inadvertent while they failed in what they intended to accomplish. In fact, as reformers, Luther and Calvin were ironic and incongruous and really did not know what they were doing. Nonconformists who demanded conformity, they were authoritarians who introduced intellectual independence to theology. Both were medieval in spirit and neither believed in freedom, but they liberated the Western mind

m) In many periods of social, political and intellectual turmoil, people have been able to adjust thinking or change their minds with surprising ease. A modern day example would be the way attitudes of faithful Communists had to flip-flop and then flop-flip as the official party line toward Germany alternated between early August, 1939 and late June, 1941.

n) And the pendulum kept on swinging when Charles I took over after Liz in 1603. He wanted to take "His" country back toward Catholicism and succeeded to the point that his son, Charles II, induced a civil war which put the Puritans (i.e., Oliver Cromwell) in power during the1650's.

© 2019 Global Journals

from the Catholic Church.[131] The religious movement they started was an accidental success they could not understand, control or stop, and it became modern in spite of itself as it was taken over by individualism, capitalism and nationalism.[132]

As theologians, the Protestant reformers replaced the authority of the Catholicism with the authority of the Bible, which they opened to the public. The inevitable but unforeseen result was that every individual who could read thought God could communicate directly with him. Unfortunately, as recorded in the Bible, the voice of God often rambles incoherently like that of a self-absorbed, underachieving, slightly schizoid, manic depressive paranoid with delusions of grandeur. Part of Her inconsistency was no doubt due to having a son, which mellowed the Supreme Parent considerably.

Confusion cum diversity was also promoted by the fact that Her Protestant readers promptly splintered into numerous sects [133] which agreed on only one essential theological point they wanted to be separate. By 1650, there were 180 denominations all based on the Bible and each more dogmatically intolerant than the next. [o] As they were all right, the called each other names, argued, mobbed and stoned each other, destroyed each others' churches [134] and otherwise displayed the civility which characterizes Christianity. Even these sects, however numerous, failed to meet the religious needs of the people, so there were revivals (like Methodism) and reversions to more primitive forms of Christianity.[135]

In the New World, fragmentation continued apace so that in 1770, Governor Bull of South Carolina noted that Christian denominations had subdivided ad infinitum as illiterate enthusiasm and wild imagination misinterpreted the Scripture.[136] By 1800, there were not just Presbyterians, but Old and New School Presbyterians, Cumberland, Springfield, Reformed and Associated Presbyterians. Likewise, there were Baptists, General, Regular, Free Will, Separate, Dutch River, Permanent and my favorite Two Seed in the Spirit Baptists[137] eventuating in some 325 competing sects by 2000.[138]

To Luther and Calvin, the plight of Protestantism would have seemed tragic, but if there was a saving grace, it was that the new sects tended to ally themselves with the new forces of capitalism and nationalism that were shaping the modern world and mind. As Protestantism was open and responsive to its general cultural milieu, it never became as dogmatic as Catholicism. If anything, Protestants were arbitrarily selective about their Biblical interpretations, picking and choosing what suited them and rejecting anything counter to their particular cause of the moment.[139]

Thus, the reformers were triumphant in that they protested successfully against centralized authority, paved the way for religious and political freedom and established the pattern of individualism. Nonetheless, they failed in their original intent to establish a pure, primitive, uncorrupted Christianity. Their medieval obsession with sin, grace and salvation was overwhelmed and buried by secular concerns with profit and national honor. Devoted to a uniform faith and intolerant of diversity, they complicated Christianity with their endless, contradictory theologies.[140]

If there was anything consistent about Protestant theology, it was that it looked backward. In fact, most of the various sects permitted less freedom of thought than did the Catholic Church, so the only freedom presented was that of choice among intolerant denominations. Further, if Protestantism generally was more practically adaptable than Catholicism, it blocked traditional theological avenues to divine grace by banishing the Virgin, saints and father confessor. Thus, if Protestants were worldly, they were left alone in the world to fight the Devil and sternly warned against enjoying the beauty and sins of Renaissance life.[141]

Altogether, the Reformation was a blight on hope and a boon to bigotry. Its incongruities inspired outrageous persecutions and unreasonable wars. Luther would have been stunned and horrified at the results of his revolution, which bequeathed a legacy of violence and uncertainty in a world ruled by profit and sword rather than love and understanding. God remained inscrutable but was now unrestrained by either logic or common sense and devoted to divine domination rather than Christ-like peace.[142] Free of scruples, the Protestant God became Machiavellian in His public capacity and condoned many things in business and affairs of state which were considered immoral in the private lives of individuals.[143]

For all the hype about theology, capitalism clearly carried the day or century as reality once again bent behavior away from belief. Predestination was shelved for liberty, and with economic liberty the big winner, the big losers were the poor. During the Middle Ages, they had received Christian charity. In the Puritan schema, the poor were moral outcasts who received retributive justice: They were poor because they were paid low wages, which they were paid because they were poor. Protestant theology supported the "Haves", who were rather condescending in their attitude toward the prerejected, unelected damned, and a venerable tradition which survived to our own day was established

o) While much can be made of the negative effect religion had on intellectual development at this time (and others), the competition among sects did promote reading and learning as they all strove to get their sacred messages out to retain supporters and gain converts. (Blanning. p. 477)

© 2019 Global Journals

of ministers preaching the need for poverty in the Divine Capitalist's Holy Economy of things.[144]

Ironically, by attributing success and failure to the moral worth of the individual, Protestants actually kept themselves from understanding the workings of economics and the nature of their own business society. This trend continued well into the Industrial Revolution, as business steadfastly refused to acknowledge any responsibility for unemployment, poverty and social distress. Indeed, it was not until business hurt business in the twentieth century that capitalists began to pay some serious attention to the effects of enterprise beyond immediate, short term profit.

The political importance of the Reformation was that the Western mind became modern, progressive and democratic. Protestantism promoted not only the initiative of the disciplined capitalistic businessman but individual freedom in general and democratic self rule. Its vocabulary was that of resistance, its appeal that of individual rights and its cause that of predetermined liberty. By attacking the authoritarian, privileged Catholic Establishment, it broke down medieval politics and furthered the emergence of the contemporary nation state.[145]

Thus, in general terms, the overall effects of the Reformation were both incongruous and profound. As a theological movement, it both rent and bound. The unity of the Catholic Church was shattered, but the spirit of Christianity was renewed by the Protestant emphasis on ethical conduct. Even the Catholic Church was stimulated to effect reforms of its grossest abuses as it renewed its moral commitment to be true at least to its own authoritarian version of Christian theology.[146]

Actually, the effects of the Reformation would have been greater had it not been essentially a theological movement, but in their revolt against Rome and earthly pretensions, the reformers were stuck with their confining, religious schema. Thus, an ideological consideration limited their interactions with the real world in that, as they firmly believed humanity could be saved for the next life by the grace of God, they were less interested in learning from or about this life than in making it conform to Biblical standards. In addition, they afflicted Western intellectual life with the same arrogant pride and narrow-minded bigotry they had opposed in others because they were basically conservative within the domain of theology. Having rejected authority and tradition, they could save their positions of power and influence only by also rejecting any further liberties being taken with their new, true faith(s).[147]

As Erich Fromm noted in Escape from Freedom, [148] Luther sought security i.e., medieval certainty. In his quest, he opened a Pandora's jar of private opinion, but no matter how many answers there were to the question of Man's relation to God, none was rational and satisfying enough to everyone, much less to Luther. Thus, he never did overcome his irrational feeling of helplessness and his own "True" answer remained an ambiguous combination of faith and fear, hope and humiliation.[149]

In fact, what Luther (i.e., the Reformation) did was individualize certainty. The overall, general certainty of medieval society was gone and replaced by new, true faiths held by the citizens. These differed as citizens differ, but a universal constant of the sixteenth century was that each person was sure that his belief was correct because, thanks to printing, each had recourse to the ultimate authority the Bible.[150]

A correlated universal was the assumption that there was a correct belief. Everyone agreed there were divergent interpretations of the Bible, but only one was right, the others wrong and naturally each home grown expert was convinced his was correct. Only a few people, like Erasmus, pointed out that part of the problem was that the Bible was not clear, with some parts being ambiguous and others contradictory. As usual, his voice was lost in the temper of the times as people continued to wrangle over obscure issues and debated questions which themselves were unclear.[151]

Just as those who wrangled and debated agreed that there was only one right answer to each major religious question of the day, they were also all[p] opposed to religious freedom. Tolerance was condemned as indifference and religious liberty as diabolical a means of letting each go to hell in his own individualistic way. Each faith fought for its own right to dominate, as each was convinced that it had The Truth. None saw that perhaps each had part of the truth and that errors are better revealed by discussion than concealed by suppression. Still, the Reformation did break the intellectual grip of the Catholic Church on the Western mind by creating a diversity of sacred truths which might be reconciled through reason.[152]*

The first half of the sixteenth century was a period of major reform for Western Civilization in politics, economics and above all religion. However, theologically, the Reformation raised more issues than it settled. Fundamentalists who believed that the Scriptures provided all solutions for all problems were still left with the problem that different people seek and find different things in the Bible. The Bible does not speak: It must be read and, worse yet, interpreted– invariably to mean not what it says but what the reader means. [153] All the Protestants did was substitute the people for the priests as the readers and inter-preters. While the reformers all expected conformity to a new theology, they found they did not have a new form of Christianity but many.[154]

p) The Anabaptists excepted.

© 2019 Global Journals

Perhaps the only thing clearly settled was that the central authority of the Catholic Church had broken down, although this had many very mixed results. The immediate effect of the ethics vacuum was a plethora of Christian sects which all shared a mutually intense bigotry and engaged in a rage of religious spats which, like the Reformation, settled nothing profound. On the other hand, when it finally became clear that neither Protestantism nor Catholicism would triumph completely, the medieval hope of doctrinal unity was gradually abandoned and grudgingly replaced by tolerance and freedom of thought about fundamentals. The new hope was that theological disputes might be conducted calmly and settled peacefully by appeals to fact and logic.[155] The reality was that the Western mind was left in the heretical state of eternally seeking temporal reform.

Thus, the Protestant Reformation is still underway, although the revolt which began as a regressive, medieval, negative movement has become transformed by the modern world into something positive: Freedom from Church authority has led to a developing realization that the task of creating peace and justice here on earth is one for all of us. In this vein, Protestant leaders are now reappraising the responsibilities of the individual to society, taking a direct active role in social reform and even sort of trying to Christianize business. Further, in terms of theology and organization, Protestantism is attempting to overcome the splintering effects inherent in its own subjective nature by the merging of some modern sects.[156]

In and of itself, however, the Reformation of the sixteenth century remains significant for us today because it showed that pride and self righteousness can become self-defeating sins when carried to excess by either the establishment or reformers. In fact, nothing fails like excess because any self-justifying belief system (be it theological or secular) courts failure when it carries its sins to extremes which preclude reform through human reason.

Notes

1. Bainton, R. The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. Beacon Press; Boston, MA. 1952. p. 3.
2. Wells, H. G. The Outline of History. 1920. (Cassel; London. 4th ed. Revised by R. Postgate 1961. p. 745.)
3. Bainton. op. cit. pp. 3-4.
4. Ibid.
5. Wells. op. cit. pp. 744-745.
6. Ibid. p. 745.
7. Bainton. op. cit. p. 17.
8. Gilmore, M. The World of Humanism. Harper & Row; NY. 1952. p. 161.
9. Bainton. op. cit. p. 17.
10. Greenfield, E. and Mee, C. Dear Prince. American Heritage Press; New York. 1966. p. 92.
11. Gilmore. op. cit. p. 162. (Unless otherwise noted, Gilmore's comments on the Renaissance popes are based on: Hughes, P. A History of the Church. Sheed and Ward; New York. 1947. Vol. III. pp. 386-535.)
12. Tuchman, B. The March of Folly. Knopf; New York. 1984. p. 67.
13. Greenfield and Mee. op. cit. p. 88.
14. Davis, K. America's Hidden History. Harper; New York. 2009. p. 15.
15. Gilmore. op. cit. p. 162.
16. Russell. B. A History of Western Philosophy. Simon and Schuster; New York. 1945. p. 499.
17. Bainton. op. cit. p. 17.
18. Kerrigan, M. American Presidents. Metro Books; New York. 2011. p. 10.
19. Gilmore. op. cit. p. 162.
20. Tuchman. op. cit. p. 94.
21. Russell. op. cit. p. 499.
22. Gilmore. op. cit. p. 163. (Based on the satire Julius Exclusus probably written by Erasmus in 1509 and published in 1514.)
23. Tuchman. op. cit. p. 96.
24. Ibid. p. 97.
25. Ibid. p. 113.
26. Colet, J. In Renaissance Europe: 1480-1520 by J. Hale. 1971. Berkeley. 1513. p. 232.
27. Shaff, D. History of the Christian Church. Grand Rapids, MI. 1910. Vol. 6, p. 766.
28. Gilmore. op. cit. pp. 163-164.
29. Tuchman. op. cit. p. 106.
30. Ibid. p. 111.
31. Ibid. p. 115.
32. Dickens, A. Reformation and Society in Sixteenth Century Europe. New York. 1966. 23.
33. Tuchman. op. cit. 119.
34. Hughes, P. A History of the Church. New York. 1947. Vol. III, 491.
35. Tuchman. op. cit. p. 126.
36. Gilmore. op. cit. p. 204.
37. Ibid.
38. Tuchman. op. cit. pp. 82-83.
39. Gilmore. op. cit. pp. 224 and 228.
40. Ibid. p. 226.
41. Ibid. p. 219.
42. Ibid. pp. 177-178.
43. Tuchman. op. cit. p. 52.
44. Gilmore. op. cit. p. 175.
45. Ibid. pp. 175-176.
46. Ibid. p. 222.
47. Russell. op. cit. p. 523. (Predestination is grounded in Ephesians 4:2. 62 A.D.)
48. Bainton. op. cit. p. 37.
49. Bacon, M. Miss Beecher in Hell. American Heritage; XIV, #1, p. 29. Dec. 1962.
50. Bainton. op. cit. pp. 32-33.
51. Ibid. pp. 33-35.
52. Luther, M. Table Talk. Ca. 1530.
53. Carnegie, D. How to Develop Self-Confidence & Influence People by Public Speaking. Gallery Books: New York. 1956. p. 192.
54. Bainton. op. cit. p. 37.
55. Wells. op. cit. pp. 787.
56. Bainton. op. cit. p. 5.
57. Ibid. p. 24.
58. Muller. H. J. The Uses of the Past. Mentor; New York. 1952. p. 286.
59. Luther, M. op. cit.
60. Barzun, J. From Dawn to Decadence. Perennial; New York. 2000. p. 18.
61. Romans 4:11 and 9:30-32. Ca. 55 A.D. (Faith trumps works.)

© 2019 Global Journals

62. White, Richard. The Republic for Which It Stands. Oxford; New York. 2017. p. 315. In the 1870's, in Utah, Protestants objected to Mormonism for the same reason. (p. 386.) The rub was that democracy is relevant when individuals make up their own minds about secular issues. In a theocracy, like Brigham Young's Utah, they do not: He does their thinking for them. (p. 387.)
63. Brinton. C. The Shaping of the Modern Mind. Mentor; New York. 1953. pp. 62-63.
64. Wells. op. cit. p. 788.
65. Barzen. op. cit. p. 15.
66. Miller, D. German Peasants' War. Osprey; London. 2003.
67. Muller. op. cit. p. 287.
68. Brinton. op. cit. p. 63.
69. Ibid. The threat to the Establishment of both printing and education was explicitly noted in 1671 by Virginia's Governor William Berkeley when he thanked God that there were no free schools nor printing in the colony. According to him, learning brought disobedience, heresy and sects into the world and printing divulged them and libels against the government. (Hening. Vol. II; p. 517.) Sad to say, Governor Berkeley's position was not unique: His successor, Lord Culpeper suppressed printing in the colony, and the first evidence of printing in Virginia was in 1733. (Ibid. p. 518.) Worse yet, Royalist opposition to expanded schooling can be traced back to no one less than Francis Bacon in 1611. (Cressy. Literacy and the Social Order. Cambridge University Press. 1980. p. 187.)
70. Bainton. op. cit. p. 244.
71. Ibid. p. 245.
72. Bushman, R. From Puritan to Yankee. Harvard University Press; Cambridge, MA. p. 23.
73. Weber, M. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Originally published as a two part article in 1904-1905. (Republished many times as a book e.g., Allen and Unwin: London. 1976.)
74. Anonymous. I Letters to Timothy. VI, 10. Ca. 100 A.D.
75. Bainton. op. cit. p. 246.
76. Augustine, St. The City of God; 413-426.
77. Job 42:2. I have a problem with a God who would kill a man's ten children just to test him (Job 1:18) because it seems kind of unfair to the kids. Could He not have kidnaped them and forced them to live for a while in Brooklyn or Bucharest or someplace and then returned them later? Also, this makes me wonder about Job's (or any Christian's) S.Q. Ignoring the mass murdering of everyone but Noah's family with His deluge, how many innocent children would God have to kill thereby breaking one of His own commandments before he got the message that His divine ego-mania rendered Him unbalanced, in need of therapy and unworthy of continued devotion? Whatever the number, in the ensuing years, His Omnipotence has killed them (including, presumably, His own divinely innocent, perfect son) or, at the very least, let them (him) be killed. JFW.
78. Brinton. op. cit. pp. 72-73.
79. Ibid. p. 73.
80. Ibid. p. 75.
81. Genesis 6-8.
82. Bainton. op. cit. pp. 253-254.
83. Ibid. p. 117.
84. Muller. op. cit. p. 291.
85. Durant, W. The Reformation. Simon and Schuster; New York. 1957. p. 475.
86. Muller. op. cit. p. 291.
87. Bainton. op. cit. pp. 253-254. See also, Russel, T. A Renegade history of the United States. Free Press; New York. 2010. p. 49.
88. Durant. op. cit. p. 467.
89. Barzen. op. cit. p. 34.
90. Bainton. op. cit. p. 119. Ergang, R. Europe from the Renaissance to Waterloo. Heath; Boston, MA. 1954. p. 201.
91. Bainton. op. cit. p. 120.
92. Beard, C. The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century in Relation to Modern Thought and Knowledge. (Based on the Hibbert Lectures, 1883.) London. 1885. p. 492. (Republished by Greenwood; Westport, CT. 1980.)
93. Bainton. op. cit. p. 121.
94. Ibid. pp. 120-121.
95. Durant. op. cit. p. 489.
96. Tuchman. op. cit. pp. 118-119.
97. Ergang. op. cit. p. 154.
98. Tuchman. op. cit. p. 123.
99. Pole, R. "Appeal to the Council of Trent" in his Eiren ikon in The Renaissance Reader, edited by J. Ross and M. McLanghlin. NY. 1953. p. 666.
100. Wells. op. cit. p. 750.
101. Ibid. p. 749. MacCulloch, D. The Reformation. Viking; New York. 2003. pp. 212-219.
102. Muller. op. cit. pp. 279-280.
103. Ibid. p. 280.
104. Ergang. op. cit. pp. 213-214.
105. Ibid. p. 211.
106. Ibid. p. 212.
107. Ibid. p. 210.
108. Muller. op. cit. p. 288.
109. My reactions to a story on ABC News. Nov. 10, 1986. (JFW)
110. Muller. op. cit. p. 288.
111. Bainton. op. cit. pp. 230-231.
112. Brinton. op. cit. pp. 58-59.
113. Bainton. op. cit. pp. 142-143.
114. Ibid. p. 142.
115. Ibid. pp. 142-143.
116. Ibid. p. 143.
117. Ergang. op. cit. Chap. VI.
118. Bainton. op. cit. pp. 153-155.
119. Wells. op. cit. p. 793. Ergang. op. cit. p. 160.
120. Ibid. pp. 160-161.
121. Bainton. op. cit. p. 155.
122. Durant. op. cit. p. 456.
123. Wells. op. cit. p. 794.
124. Ibid. p. 746.
125. Durant. op. cit. p. 456.
126. Wells. op. cit. p. 746.
127. Bainton. op. cit. pp. 236-238.
128. Foxe, J. Book of Martyrs. 1563.
129. Brinton. op. cit. pp. 69-71.
130. Bainton. op. cit. p. 242.
131. Brinton. op. cit. p. 61.
132. Muller. op. cit. p. 288.
133. Vernon, T. Unheavenly Discourses. Fayetteville, AR. 1968. p. 8.
134. Wood, G. Empire of Liberty. Oxford University Press; New York. 2009. p. 610.
135. Muller. op. cit. pp. 288-289.
136. Bull, W. To the Board of Trade, Nov. 30, 1770. Reprinted in Merrens, ed., Colonial South Carolina Scene, 254 -270.
137. Wood. op. cit.
138. Barzun. op. cit. p. 28. (McWilliams says more than 1,000.)
139. Muller. op. cit. p. 289.
140. Ibid. p. 286.
141. Ibid.
142. Brinton. op. cit. p. 67.
143. Muller. op. cit. p. 290.
144. Ibid. pp. 292-293.
145. Brinton. op. cit. p. 60.
146. Bainton. op. cit. p. 261.
147. Muller. op. cit. p. 287.
148. Fromm, E. Escape from Freedom. Holt, Rinehart and Winston; NY. 1941.

© 2019 Global Journals

149. Muller. op. cit. p. 287 (footnote).
150. Bainton. op. cit. pp. 214-215.
151. Ibid. pp. 215-216.
152. Ibid. p. 211.
153. Shaw, G. Undated citation on page 424 of P. McWilliams's Ain't Nobody's Business If You Do. Prelude Press; Los Angeles, CA. 1993. (Even a devout atheist like myself finds solace and compassionate inspiration in the passage Ezekiel: 23:20. NEB. Only a truly great book can express such timeless wisdom in such poetic beauty. JFW)
154. Brinton. op. cit. p. 63.
155. Russell. op. cit. pp. 524-525.
156. Vernon, T. The Age of Unreason. M&M Press; Fayetteville, AR. 1987. p. 3.

© 2019 Global Journals